

· 中英双语珍藏本 ·

F. Scott Fitzgerald

了不起的盖茨比

〔美〕菲茨杰拉德 著 李宇坤 译

T h e G r e a t G a t s b y



菲茨杰拉德传世经典之作

二十世纪“百部最佳英语小说榜”中傲居亚军

最新同名改编电影由

莱昂纳多·迪卡普里奥、凯瑞·穆里根联袂主演

2013 年最值得期待的新片之一

上海译文出版社



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封面

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了不起的盖茨比

A watercolor illustration of a city skyline. On the left, a tall, slender blue skyscraper reaches towards the top. To its right, a yellow skyscraper with a pointed top is visible. In the foreground, there are several shorter buildings in various colors like brown, red, and purple. The sky is a mix of yellow and light blue. The overall style is soft and painterly.

了不起的盖茨比

T h e G r e a t G a t s b y

那就戴顶金帽子，如果能打动她的心肠；

如果你能跳得高，就为她也跳一跳，

跳到她高呼“情郎，戴金帽、跳得高的情郎，我一定得把你要！”

——托马斯·帕克·丹维里埃

译本序

F·司各特·菲茨杰拉德（1896—1940）的一生是短暂的，他的创作生涯充其量不过二十年，却留下了四部长篇小说和一百六十多篇短篇小说，使他成为二十世纪最重要的美国小说家之一。

菲茨杰拉德于一八九六年九月二十四日出生在美国中西部明尼苏达州圣保罗市一个小商人家庭。他家境不佳，全靠亲戚的资助才上了东部一所富家子弟的预科学校，“因自惭形秽而痛苦万状……因为……他是个在富家子弟学校里的穷孩子”。一九一三年秋，他又在亲戚的资助下进入贵族学府普林斯顿大学，起初醉心社会活动，梦想崭露头角，后来决心从事创作，并写下了他第一部小说《人间天堂》的初稿。他当时对他的同学、后来成为著名文学评论家的艾德蒙·威尔逊说：“我要成为有史以来最伟大的作家之一，你呢？”

一九一七年美国参加第一次世界大战，菲茨杰拉德应征入伍，当了一名步兵少尉，被派驻到南方的亚拉巴马州给一位将军当副官。在这里，他爱上了一位法官的女儿姗尔达，并且和她订了婚。大战结束以后，他回到纽约谋生，收入微薄，前途渺茫，未婚妻立即解除婚约。菲茨杰拉德失望之余，返回家园，闭门修改被出版商退

稿的《人间天堂》。一九二〇年三月，小说出版，轰动一时，作者也如愿以偿地和那位“金姑娘”结了婚。但是，他却永远没有忘记：这个一年之后口袋里金钱丁当响才娶到“金姑娘”的男人，将永远重视他对有些阶级的不信任和敌意。他痛苦的经历和“农民的郁积的愤懑”加深了他对美国社会的认识，为他后来的小说创作提供了感性的素材。

继《人间天堂》之后，又出版了《美丽的不幸者》（1922）、《了不起的盖茨比》（1925）和《夜色温柔》（1934）。短篇小说集包括《爵士时代的故事》（1922）、《那些忧伤的年轻人》（1926）等等。

菲茨杰拉德一举成名之后，就像他小说中的某些人物那样，沉湎于酒食征逐的生活，挥金如土，成为纽约和巴黎社交界的名人。这种热狂的生活不仅影响了他的健康和创作，而且也使他经常入不敷出，为了挣钱挥霍又不得不去写一些他自己也为之感到羞耻的作品。《了不起的盖茨比》发表后不久，他的妻子得了精神病，他本人长年饮酒过度，以致引起精神崩溃。“在灵魂的真正的暗夜里，”他在《精神崩溃》中写道，“日复一日，永远是深夜三点钟。”长篇小说《夜色温柔》于一九三四年发表之后，受到评论界的冷遇，菲茨杰拉德从此一蹶不振。三年以后，他不得不移居好莱坞，去为电影公司写电影剧本谋生。一九四〇年，他已病体支离，但精神振作，立志要写一部杰作，即小说《最后一个大亨》，但只写出了六章就在圣诞节前四天因冠心病猝发而结束了悲剧的一生。

作为一个文学艺术家，菲茨杰拉德最引人瞩目的特色是他那诗人和梦想家的气质和风格。在小说创作方面，他受到了俄罗斯作家屠格涅夫、法国作家福楼拜、英国作家康拉德的影响，但他最为之倾心的作家却是英国浪漫主义大诗人济慈。他把自己和济慈划归同一种类型：“成熟得早的才华往往是属于诗人类型的，我自己基本上

就是如此。”

二十世纪的二十年代和三十年代是美国小说的黄金时代，这二十年间群星灿烂，各放异彩。一九二五年四月，《了不起的盖茨比》在纽约出版，著名诗人兼文学评论家T·S·艾略特立刻称之为“美国小说自从亨利·詹姆斯以来迈出的第一步”。海明威在回忆菲茨杰拉德时写道，“既然他能够写出一本像《了不起的盖茨比》这样好的书，我相信他一定能够写出更好的书。”如果我们记住在那个期间德莱塞已经出版了一部又一部长篇巨著，并且在同一年又发表了他的代表作《美国的悲剧》，如果我们知道艾略特和海明威是多么苛刻的批评家，那么我们就难怪领会这些评价的分量和全部意义了。

《人间天堂》问世以后的十几年中，菲茨杰拉德红极一时。他的长篇小说受到好评，他的短篇小说在最时髦的杂志上发表。三十年代后期，他的声名一落千丈，他去世之前他的书已无人问津了。直到他死了十多年以后，他的作品在美国和西欧才重新引起人们的重视，同时评论家也对他作出了新的高度评价。马尔科姆·考利把《了不起的盖茨比》列为美国最优秀的十二部小说之一。他的评传的作者、美国学者阿·密兹纳说，“虽然有着许多明显的缺点和错误，但是从某些方面看，他的一生是英雄的一生。”

巫宁坤

第一章

我年纪还轻，阅历不深的时候，我父亲教导过我一句话，我至今还念念不忘。

“每逢你想要批评任何人的时候，”他对我说，“你就记住，这个世界上所有的

人，并不是个个都有过你那些优越条件。”

他没再说别的。但是，我们父子之间话虽不多，却一向是非常通气的，因此我明白他的意思远远不止那一句话。久而久之，我就惯于对所有的人都保留判断，这个习惯既使得许多怪僻的人肯跟我讲心里话，也使我成为不少爱唠叨的惹人厌烦的人的受害者。这个特点在正常的人身上出现的时候，心理不正常的人很快就会察觉并且抓住不放。由于这个缘故，我上大学的时候就被不公正地指责为小政客，因为我可耳闻一些放荡的、不知名的人的秘密的伤心事。绝大多数的隐私都不是我打听来的——每逢我根据某种明白无误的迹象看出又有一次倾诉衷情在地平线上喷薄欲出的时候，我往往假装睡觉，假装心不在焉，或者假装出不怀好意的轻佻态度；因为青年人倾诉的衷情，或者至少他们表达这些衷情所用的语言，往往是剽窃性的，而且多有明显的隐瞒。保留判断是表示怀有无限的希望。我现在仍然唯恐错过什么东西，如果我忘记（如同我父亲带着优越感所暗示过的，我现在又带着优越感重复的）基本的道德观念是在人出世的时候就分配不均的。

在这样夸耀我的宽容之后，我得承认宽容也有个限度。人的行为可能建立在坚固的岩石上面，也可能建立在潮湿的沼泽之中，但是一过某种程度，我就不管它是建立在什么上面的了。去年秋天我从东部回来的时候，我觉得我希望全世界的人都穿上军装，并且永远在道德上保持一种立正姿势；我不再要参与放浪形骸的游乐，也不再要偶尔窥见人内心深处的荣幸了。唯有盖茨比——就是把名字赋予本书的那个人——除外，不属于我这种反应的范围——盖茨比，他代表我所真心鄙夷的一切。假使人的品格是一系列连续不断的成功的姿态，那么这个人身上就有一种瑰丽的异彩，他对于人生的希望具有一种高度的敏感，类似一台能够记录万里以外的地震的错综复杂的仪器。这种敏感和通常美其名曰“创造性质”的那种软绵绵的感受性毫不相干——它是一种异乎寻常的永葆希望的天赋，一种富于浪漫色彩的敏捷，这

是我在别人身上从未发现过的，也是我今后不大可能会再发现的。不——盖茨比本人到头来倒是无可厚非的；使我对人们短暂的悲哀和片刻的欢欣暂时丧失兴趣的，却是那些吞噬盖茨比心灵的东西，是在他的幻梦消逝后跟踪而来的恶浊的灰尘。

我家三代以来都是这个中西部城市家道殷实的头面人物。姓卡罗威的也可算是个世家，据家里传说我们是布克娄奇公爵的后裔，但是我们家系的实际创始人却是我祖父的哥哥。他在一八五一年来到这里，买了个替身去参加南北战争，开始做起五金批发生意，也就是我父亲今天还在经营的买卖。

我从未见过这位伯祖父，但是据说我长得像他，特别有挂在父亲办公室里的那幅铁板面孔的画像为证。我在一九一五年从纽黑文毕业，刚好比我父亲晚四分之一个世纪，不久以后我就参加了那个称之为世界大战的延迟的条顿民族大迁徙。我在反攻中感到其乐无穷，回来以后就觉得百无聊赖了。中西部不再是世界温暖的中心，而倒像是宇宙的荒凉的边缘——于是我决定到东部去学债券生意。我所认识的人个个都是做债券生意的，因此我认为它多养活一个单身汉总不成问题。我的叔伯阿姨们商量了一番，俨然是为我挑选一家预备学校，最后才说：“呃……那就……这样吧。”面容都很严肃而犹疑。父亲答应为我提供一年的费用，然后又几经耽搁我才在一九二二年春天到东部去，自以为是一去不返的了。

切合实际的办法是在城里找一套房间寄宿，但那时已是温暖季节，而我又是刚刚离开了一个有宽阔的草坪和宜人的树木的地方，因此办公室里一个年轻人提议我们俩到近郊合租一所房子的时候，我觉得那是个很妙的主意。他找到了房子，那是一座风雨剥蚀的木板平房，月租八十美元，可是在最后一分钟公司把他调到华盛顿去，我也就只好一个人搬到郊外去住了。我有一条狗、——至少在它跑掉以前我养了它几天——一辆旧道奇汽车和一个芬兰女用人，她替我收拾床铺，烧早饭，在电炉上

一面做饭，一面嘴里咕哝着芬兰的格言。

头几天我感到孤单，直到一天早上有个人，比我更是新来乍到的，在路上拦住了我。

“到西卵镇去怎么走啊？”他无可奈何地问我。

我告诉了他。我再继续往前走的时候，我不再感到孤单了。我成了领路人、开拓者、一个原始的移民。他无意之中授予了我这一带地方的荣誉市民权。

眼看阳光明媚，树木忽然间长满了叶子，就像电影里东西长得那么快，我就又产生了那个熟悉的信念，觉得生命随着夏天的来临又重新开始了。

有那么多书要读，这是一点，同时从清新宜人的空气中也有那么多营养要汲取。我买了十来本有关银行业、信贷和投资证券的书籍，一本本红皮烫金立在书架上，好像造币厂新铸的钱币一样，准备揭示迈达斯、摩根和米赛纳斯的秘诀。除此之外，我还有雄心要读许多别的书。我在大学的时候是喜欢舞文弄墨的，——有一年我给《耶鲁新闻》写过一连串一本正经而又平淡无奇的社论——现在我准备把诸如此类的东西重新纳入我的生活，重新成为“通才”，也就是那种最浅薄的专家。这并不只是一个俏皮的警句——光从一个窗口去观察人生究竟要成功得多。

纯粹出于偶然，我租的这所房子在北美最离奇的一个村镇。这个村镇位于纽约市正东那个细长的奇形怪状的小岛上——那里除了其他天然奇观以外，还有两个地方形状异乎寻常。离城二十英里路，有一对其大无比的鸡蛋般的半岛，外形一模一样，中间隔着一条小湾，一直伸进西半球那片最恬静的咸水，长岛海峡那个巨大的潮湿的场院。它们并不是正椭圆形，——而是像哥伦布故事里的鸡蛋一样，在碰过的那头都是压碎了的——但是它们外貌的相似一定是使从头上飞过的海鸥惊异不已的源

泉。对于没有翅膀的人类来说，一个更加饶有趣味的现象，却是这两个地方除了形状大小之外，在每一个方面都截然不同。

我住在西卵，这是两个地方中比较不那么时髦的一个，不过这是一个非常肤浅的标签，不足以表示二者之间那种离奇古怪而又很不吉祥的对比。我的房子紧靠在鸡蛋的顶端，离海湾只有五十码，挤在两座每季租金要一万二到一万五的大别墅中间。我右边的那一幢，不管按什么标准来说，都是一个庞然大物——它是诺曼底某市政厅的翻版，一边有一座簇新的塔楼，上面疏疏落落地覆盖着一层常春藤，还有一座大理石游泳池，以及四十多英亩的草坪和花园。这是盖茨比的公馆。或者更确切地说这是一位姓盖茨比的阔人所住的公馆，因为我还不认识盖茨比先生。我自己的房子实在难看，幸而很小，没有被人注意，因此我才有缘欣赏一片海景，欣赏我邻居草坪的一部分，并且能以与百万富翁为邻而引以自慰——所有这一切每月只需出八十美元。

小湾对岸，东卵豪华住宅区的洁白的宫殿式的大厦沿着水边光彩夺目，那个夏天的故事是从我开车去那边到汤姆·布坎农夫妇家吃饭的那个晚上才真正开始的。黛西是我远房表妹，汤姆是我在大学里就认识的。大战刚结束之后，我在芝加哥还在他们家住过两天。

她的丈夫，除了擅长其他各种运动之外，曾经是纽黑文有史以来最伟大的橄榄球运动员之一——也可说是个全国闻名的人物，这种人二十一岁就在有限范围内取得登峰造极的成就，从此以后一切都不免有走下坡路的味道了。他家里非常有钱，——还在大学时他那样任意花钱已经遭人非议，但现在他离开了芝加哥搬到东部来，搬家的那个排场可真要使人惊讶不置。比方说，他从森林湖运来整整一群打马球用的马匹。在我这一辈子中竟然还有人阔到能够干这种事，实在令人难以置信。

他们为什么到东部来，我并不知道。他们并没有什么特殊的理由，在法国待了一年，后来又不安定地东飘西荡，所去的地方都有人打马球，而且大家都有钱。这次是定居了，黛西在电话里说。可是我并不相信——我看不透黛西的心思，不过我觉得汤姆会为追寻某场无法重演的球赛的戏剧性的激奋，就这样略有点怅惘地永远飘荡下去。

于是，在一个温暖有风的晚上，我开车到东卵去看望两个我几乎完全不了解的老朋友。他们的房子比我料想的还要豪华，一座鲜明悦目，红白二色的乔治王殖民时代式的大厦，面临着海湾。草坪从海滩起步，直奔大门，足足有四分之一英里，一路跨过日晷、砖径和火红的花园——最后跑到房子跟前，仿佛借助于奔跑的势头，爽性变成绿油油的常春藤，沿着墙往上爬。房子正面有一溜法国式的落地长窗，此刻在夕照中金光闪闪，迎着午后的暖风敞开着。汤姆·布坎农身穿骑装，两腿叉开，站在前门阳台上。

从纽黑文时代以来，他样子已经变了。现在他是三十多岁的人了，身体健壮，头发稻草色，嘴边略带狠相，举止高傲。两只炯炯有神的傲慢的眼睛已经在他脸上占了支配地位，给人一种永远盛气凌人的印象。即使他那套像女人穿的优雅的骑装也掩藏不住那个身躯的巨大的体力——他仿佛填满了那双雪亮的皮靴，把上面的带子绷得紧紧的；他的肩膀转动时，你可以看到一大块肌肉在他薄薄上衣下面移动。这是一个力大无比的身躯，一个残忍的身躯。

他说话的声音，又粗又大的男高音，增添了他给人的性情暴戾的印象。他说起话来还带着一种长辈教训人的口吻，即使对他喜欢的人也一样。因此在纽黑文的时候对他恨之入骨的大有人在。

“我说，你可别认为我在这些问题上的意见是说了算的，”他仿佛在说，“仅仅因

为我力气比你大，比你更有男子汉气概。”我们俩属于同一个高年级学生联谊会；虽然我们的关系并不密切，我总觉得他很看重我，而且带着他那特有的粗野、蛮横的怅惘神气，希望我也喜欢他。

我们在阳光和煦的阳台上谈了几分钟。

“我这地方很不错，”他说，他的眼睛不停地转来转去。

他抓住我的一只胳膊把我转过身来，伸出一只巨大的手掌指点眼前的景色，在一挥手之中包括了一座意大利式的凹型花园，半英亩地深色的、浓郁的玫瑰花，以及一艘在岸边随着浪潮起伏的狮子鼻的汽艇。

“这地方原来属于石油大王德梅因。”他又把我推转过身来，客客气气但是不容分说，“我们到里面去吧。”

我们穿过一条高高的走廊，走进一间宽敞明亮的玫瑰色的屋子。两头都是落地长窗，把这间屋子轻巧地嵌在这座房子当中。这些长窗都半开着，在外面嫩绿的草地的映衬下，显得晶莹耀眼，那片草仿佛要长到室内来似的。一阵轻风吹过屋里，把窗帘从一头吹进来，又从另一头吹出去，好像一面面白旗，吹向天花板上糖花结婚蛋糕似的装饰，然后轻轻拂过绛色地毯，留下一阵阴影有如风吹海面。

屋子里唯一完全静止的东西是一张庞大的长沙发椅，上面有两个年轻的女人，活像浮在一个停泊在地面的大气球上。她们俩都身穿白衣，衣裙在风中飘荡，好像她们乘气球绕着房子飞了一圈刚被风吹回来似的。我准是站了好一会，倾听窗帘刮动的劈啪声和墙上一幅挂像嘎吱嘎吱的响声。忽然砰然一声，汤姆·布坎农关上了后面的落地窗，室内的余风才渐渐平息，窗帘、地毯和两位少妇也都慢慢地降落地面。

两个之中比较年轻的那个，我不认识。她平躺在长沙发的一头，身子一动也不动，下巴稍微向上仰起，仿佛她在上面平衡着一件什么东西，生怕它掉下来似的。如果她从眼角中看到了我，她可毫无表示——其实我倒吃了一惊，差一点要张口向她道歉，因为我进来惊动了她。

另外那个少妇，黛西，想要站起身来，——她身子微微向前倾，一脸诚心诚意的表情——接着她噗嗤一笑，又滑稽又可爱地轻轻一笑，我也跟着笑了，接着就走上前去进了屋子。

“我高兴得瘫……瘫掉了。”

她又笑了一次，好像她说了一句非常俏皮的话，接着就拉住我的手，仰起脸看着我，表示世界上没有第二个人她更高兴见到的了。那是她特有的一种表情。她低声告诉我那个在搞平衡动作的姑娘姓贝克（我听人说过，黛西的喃喃低语只是为了让人家把身子向她靠近，这是不相干的闲话，丝毫无损于这种表情的魅力）。

不管怎样，贝克小姐的嘴唇微微一动，她几乎看不出来地向我点了点头，接着赶忙把头又仰回去——她在保持平衡的那件东西显然歪了一下，让她吃了一惊。道歉的话又一次冒到了我的嘴边。这种几乎是完全我行我素的神情总是使我感到目瞪口呆，满心赞佩。

我掉过头去看我的表妹，她开始用她那低低的、令人激动的声音向我提问题。这是那种叫人侧耳倾听的声音，仿佛每句话都是永远不会重新演奏的一组音符。她的脸庞忧郁而美丽，脸上有明媚的神采，有两只明媚的眼睛，有一张明媚而热情的嘴，但是她声音里有一种激动人心的特质，那是为她倾倒过的男人都觉得难以忘怀的：一种抑扬动听的魅力，一声喃喃的“听着”，一种暗示，说她片刻以前刚刚干完一

些赏心乐事，而且下一个小时里还有赏心乐事。

我告诉了她我到东部来的途中曾在芝加哥停留一天，有十来个朋友都托我向她问好。

“他们想念我吗？”她大喜若狂似地喊道。

“全城都凄凄惨惨。所有的汽车都把左后轮漆上了黑漆当花圈，沿着城北的湖边整夜哀声不绝于耳。”

“太美了！汤姆，咱们回去吧。明天！”随即她又毫不相干地说：“你应当看看宝宝。”

“我很想看。”

“她睡着了。她三岁。你从没见过她吗？”

“从来没有。”

“那么你应当看看她。她是……”

汤姆·布坎农本来坐立不安地在屋子里来回走动，现在停了下来把一只手放在我肩上。

“你在干什么买卖，尼克？”

“我在做债券生意。”

“在哪家公司？”

我告诉了他。

“从来没听说过，”他断然地说。

这使我感到不痛快。

“你会听到的，”我简慢地答道，“你在东部待久了就会听到的。”

“噢，我一定会在东部待下来的，你放心吧。”他先望望黛西又望望我，仿佛他在提防还有别的什么名堂。“我要是个天大的傻瓜才会到任何别的地方去住。”

这时贝克小姐说：“绝对如此！”来得那么突然，使我吃了一惊——这是我进了屋子之后她说的第一句话。显然她的话也使她自己同样吃惊，因为她打了个呵欠，随即做了一连串迅速而灵巧的动作就站了起来。

“我都木了，”她抱怨道，“我在那张沙发上躺了不知多久了。”

“别盯着我看，”黛西回嘴说，“我整个下午都在动员你上纽约去。”

“不要，谢谢，”贝克小姐对着刚从食品间端来的四杯鸡尾酒说，“我正一板一眼地在进行锻炼哩。”

她的男主人难以置信地看着她。

“是吗！”他把自己的酒喝了下去，仿佛那是杯底的一滴。“我真不明白你怎么可能做得成任何事情。”

我看看贝克小姐，感到纳闷，她“做得成”的是什么事。我喜欢看她。她是个身材苗条、乳房小小的姑娘，由于她像个年轻的军校学员那样挺起胸膛更显得英姿挺

拔。她那双被太阳照得眯缝着的灰眼睛也看着我，一张苍白、可爱、不满的脸上流露出有礼貌的、回敬的好奇心。我这才想起我以前在什么地方见过她，或者她的照片。

“你住在西卵吧！”她用鄙夷的口气说，“我认识那边一个人。”

“我一个人也不认……”

“你总该认识盖茨比吧。”

“盖茨比？”黛西追问道，“哪个盖茨比？”

我还没来得及回答说他是我的邻居，用人就宣布开饭了；汤姆·布坎农不由分说就把一只紧张的胳膊插在我的胳膊下面，把我从屋子里推出去，仿佛他是在把一个棋子推到棋盘上另一格去似的。

两位女郎袅袅婷婷地、懒洋洋地，手轻轻搭在腰上，在我们前面往外走上玫瑰色的阳台。阳台迎着落日，餐桌上有四支蜡烛在减弱了的风中闪烁不定。

“点蜡烛干什么？”黛西皱着眉头表示不悦。她用手指把它们掐灭了。“再过两个星期就是一年中最长的一天了。”她满面春风地看着我们大家。“你们是否老在等一年中最长的一天，到头来偏偏还是错过？我老在等一年中最长的一天，到头来偏偏还是错过了。”

“我们应当计划干点什么，”贝克小姐打着呵欠说道，仿佛上床睡觉似的在桌子旁边坐了下来。

“好嘛，”黛西说，“咱们计划什么呢？”她把脸转向我，无可奈何地问道，“人

们究竟计划些什么？”

我还没来得及回答，她的两眼带着畏惧的表情盯着她的小手指。

“瞧！”她抱怨道，“我把它碰伤了。”

我们大家都瞧了——指关节有点青紫。

“是你搞的，汤姆，”她责怪他说，“我知道你不是故意的，但确实是你搞的。这是我的报应，嫁给这么个粗野的男人，一个又粗又大又笨拙的汉子……”

“我恨笨拙这个词，”汤姆气呼呼地抗议道，“即使开玩笑也不行。”

“笨拙，”黛西强嘴说。

有时她和贝克小姐同时讲话，可是并不惹人注意，不过开点无关紧要的玩笑，也算不上唠叨，跟她们的白色衣裙以及没有任何欲念的超然的眼睛一样冷漠。她们坐在这里，应酬汤姆和我，只不过是客客气气地尽力款待客人或者接受款待。她们知道一会儿晚饭就吃完了，再过一会儿这一晚也就过去，随随便便就打发掉了。这和西部截然不同，在那里每逢晚上待客总是迫不及待地从一个阶段到另一个阶段推向结尾，总是有所期待而又不断地感到失望，要不然就对结尾时刻的到来感到十分紧张和恐惧。

“你让我觉得自己不文明，黛西，”我喝第二杯虽然有点软木塞气味却相当精彩的红葡萄酒时坦白地说，“你不能谈谈庄稼或者谈点儿别的什么吗？”

我说这句话并没有什么特殊的用意，但它却出乎意外地被人接过去了。

“文明正在崩溃，”汤姆气势汹汹地大声说，“我近来成了个对世界非常悲观的

人。你看过戈达德这个人写的《有色帝国的兴起》吗？”

“呃，没有，”我答道，对他的语气感到很吃惊。

“我说，这是一本很好的书，人人都应当读一读。书的大意是说，如果我们不当心，白色人种就会……就会完全被淹没了。讲的全是科学道理，已经证明了的。”

“汤姆变得很渊博了。”黛西说，脸上露出一种并不深切的忧伤的表情。“他看一些深奥的书，书里有许多深奥的字眼。那是个什么字来着，我们……”

“我说，这些书都是有科学根据的，”汤姆一个劲地说下去，对她不耐烦地瞅了一眼。“这家伙把整个道理讲得一清二楚。我们是占统治地位的人种，我们有责任提高警惕，不然的话，其他人种就会掌握一切了。”

“我们非打倒他们不可，”黛西低声地讲，一面拼命地对炽热的太阳眨眼。

“你们应当到加利福尼亚住家，……”贝克小姐开口说，可是汤姆在椅子上沉重地挪动了一下身子，打断了她的话。

“主要的论点是说我们是北欧日耳曼民族。我是，你是，你也是，还有……”稍稍犹疑了一下之后，他点了点头把黛西也包括了进去，这时她又冲我眨了眨眼。“而我们创造了所有那些加在一起构成文明的东西——科学艺术啦，以及其他等等。你们明白吗？”

他那副专心致志的劲头看上去有点可怜，似乎他那种自负的态度，虽然比往日还突出，但对他来说已经很不够了。这时屋子里电话铃响了，男管家离开阳台去接，黛西几乎立刻就抓住这个打岔的机会把脸凑到我面前来。

“我要告诉你一桩家庭秘密，”她兴奋地咬耳朵说，“是关于男管家的鼻子的。你想听听男管家鼻子的故事吗？”

“这正是我今晚来拜访的目的嘛。”

“你要知道，他并不是一向当男管家的；他从前专门替纽约一个人家擦银器，那家有一套供二百人用的银餐具。他从早擦到晚，后来他的鼻子就受不了啦.....”

“后来情况越来越坏，”贝克小姐提了一句。

“是的。情况越来越坏，最后他只得辞掉不干。”

有一会儿工夫夕阳的余晖温情脉脉地照在她那红艳发光的脸上；她的声音使我身不由主地凑上前去屏息倾听——然后光彩逐渐消逝，每一道光都依依不舍地离开了她，就像孩子们在黄昏时刻离开一条愉快的街道那样。

男管家回来凑着汤姆的耳朵咕哝了点什么，汤姆听了眉头一皱，把他的椅子朝后一推，一言不发就走进室内去。仿佛他的离去使她活跃了起来，黛西又探身向前，她的声音像唱歌似的抑扬动听。

“我真高兴在我的餐桌上见到你，尼克。你使我想一朵——一朵玫瑰花，一朵地地道道的玫瑰花。是不是？”她把脸转向贝克小姐要求她附和这句话，“一朵地地道道的玫瑰花？”

这是瞎说。我跟玫瑰花毫无相似之处。她不过是随嘴乱说一气，但是却洋溢着一种动人的激情，仿佛她的心就藏在那些气喘吁吁的、激动人的话语里，想向你倾诉一番。然后她突然把餐巾往桌上一扔，说了声对不起就走进房子里面去了。

贝克小姐和我互相使了一下眼色，故意表示没有任何意思。我刚想开口的时候，她警觉地坐直起来，用警告的声音说了一声“嘘”。可以听得见那边屋子里有一阵低低的、激动的交谈声，贝克小姐就毫无顾忌地探身竖起耳朵去听。喃喃的话语声几次接近听得真的程度，降低下去，又激动地高上去，然后完全终止。

“你刚才提到的那位盖茨比先生是我的邻居……”我开始说。

“别说话，我要听听出了什么事。”

“是出了事吗？”我天真地问。

“难道说你不知道吗？”贝克小姐说，她真的感到奇怪。“我以为人人都知道了。”

“我可不知道。”

“哎呀……”她犹疑了一下说，“汤姆在纽约有个女人。”

“有个女人？”我茫然地跟着说。

贝克小姐点点头。

“她起码该顾点大体，不在吃饭的时候给他打电话嘛。你说呢？”

我几乎还没明白她的意思，就听见一阵裙衣窸窣和皮靴咯咯的声响，汤姆和黛西回到餐桌上来了。

“真没办法！”黛西强作欢愉地大声说。

她坐了下来，先朝贝克小姐然后朝我察看了一眼，又接着说：“我到外面看了一

下，看到外面浪漫极了。草坪上有一只鸟，我想一定是搭康拉德或者白星轮船公司的船过来的一只夜莺。它在不停地歌唱……”她的声音也像唱歌一般。“很浪漫，是不是，汤姆？”

“非常浪漫，”他说，然后哭丧着脸对我说，“吃过饭要是天还够亮的话，我要领你到马房去看看。”

里面电话又响了，大家都吃了一惊。黛西断然地对汤姆摇摇头，于是马房的话题，事实上所有的话题，都化为乌有了。在餐桌上最后五分钟残存的印象中，我记得蜡烛又无缘无故地点着了，同时我意识到自己很想正眼看看大家，然而却又想避开大家的目光。我猜不出黛西和汤姆在想什么，但是我也怀疑，就连贝克小姐那样似乎玩世不恭的人，是否能把这第五位客人尖锐刺耳的迫切呼声完全置之度外。对某种性情的人来说，这个局面可能倒怪有意思的——我自己本能的反应是立刻去打电话叫警察。

马，不用说，就没有再提了。汤姆和贝克小姐，两人中间隔着几英尺的暮色，慢慢溜达着回书房去，仿佛走到一具确实存在的尸体旁边去守夜。同时，我一面装出感兴趣的样子，一面装出有点聋，跟着黛西穿过一连串的走廊，走到前面的阳台上去。在苍茫暮色中我们并排在一张柳条的长靠椅上坐下。

黛西把脸捧在手里，好像在抚摩她那可爱的面庞，同时她渐渐放眼去看那天鹅绒般的暮色。我看出她心潮澎湃，于是我问了几个我认为有镇静作用的关于她小女儿的问题。

“我们彼此并不熟识，尼克，”她忽然说，“尽管我们是表亲。你没参加我的婚礼。”

“我打仗还没回来。”

“确实。”她犹疑了一下。“哎，我可真够受的，尼克，所以我把一切都差不多看透了。”

显然她抱这种看法是有缘故的。我等着听，可是她没再往下说，过了一会儿我又吞吞吐吐地回到了她女儿这个话题。

“我想她一定会说，又……会吃，什么都会吧。”

“呃，是啊。”她心不在焉地看着我。“听我说，尼克，让我告诉你她出世的时候我说了什么话。你想听吗？”

“非常想听。”

“你听了就会明白我为什么会这样看待——一切事物。她出世还不到一个钟头，汤姆就天晓得跑到哪里去了。我从乙醚麻醉中醒过来，有一种孤苦伶仃的感觉，马上问护士是男孩还是女孩。她告诉我我是个女孩，我就转过脸哭了起来。‘好吧，’我说，‘我很高兴是个女孩。而且我希望她将来是个傻瓜——这就是女孩子在这种世界上最好的出路，当一个美丽的小傻瓜。’”

“你明白我认为反正一切都糟透了，”她深信不疑地继续说，“人人都这样认为——那些最先进的人。而我知道。我什么地方都去过了，什么也都见过了，什么也都干过了。”她两眼闪闪有光，环顾四周，俨然不可一世的神气，很像汤姆，她又放声大笑，笑声里充满了可怕的讥嘲。“饱经世故……天哪，我可是饱经世故了。”

她的话音一落，不再强迫我注意她和相信她时，我就感到她刚才说的根本不是真心话。这使我感到不安，似乎整个晚上都是一个圈套，强使我也付出一份相应的感

情。我等着，果然过了一会儿她看着我时，她那可爱的脸上就确实露出了假笑，仿佛她已经表明了她是她和汤姆所属于的一个上流社会的秘密团体中的一分子。

室内，那间绯红色的屋子灯火辉煌。汤姆和贝克小姐各坐在长沙发的一头，她在念《星期六晚邮报》给他听，声音很低，没有变化，一连串的字有一种让人定心的调子。灯光照在他皮靴上雪亮，照在她秋叶黄的头发上暗淡无光，每当她翻过一页，胳膊上细细的肌肉颤动的时候，灯光又一晃一晃地照在纸上。

我们走进屋子，她举起一只手来示意叫我们不要出声。

“待续，”她念道，一面把杂志扔在桌上，“见本刊下期。”

她膝盖一动，身子一直，就霍地站了起来。

“十点了，”她说，仿佛在天花板上看到了时间。“我这个好孩子该上床睡觉了。”

“乔丹明天要去参加锦标赛，”黛西解释道，“在威斯彻斯特那边。”

“哦……你是乔丹·贝克。”

我现在才明白为什么她的面孔很眼熟——她那可爱的傲慢的表情曾经从报道阿希维尔、温泉和棕榈海滩的体育生活的许多报刊照片上朝外向我看过。我还听说过关于她的一些闲话，一些说她不好的闲话，至于究竟是什么事我可早已忘掉了。

“明天见，”她轻声说。“八点叫我，好吧？”

“只要你起得来。”

“我一定可以。晚安，卡罗威先生。改天见吧。”

“你们当然会再见面的，”黛西保证道，“说实在，我想我要做个媒。多来几趟，尼克，我就想办法——呃——把你们俩拽到一起。比方说，无意间把你们关在被单储藏室里啦，或者把你们放在小船上往海里一推啦，以及诸如此类的办法……”

“明天见，”贝克小姐从楼梯上喊道。“我一个字也没听见。”

“她是个好孩子，”过了一会儿汤姆说。“他们不应当让她这样到处乱跑。”

“是谁不应当？”黛西冷冷地问。

“她家里人。”

“她家里只有一个七老八十的姑妈。再说，尼克以后可以照应她了，是不是，尼克？她今年夏天要到这里来度许多个周末。我想这里的家庭环境对她会大有好处的。”

黛西和汤姆一声不响地彼此看了一会儿。

“她是纽约州的人吗？”我赶快问。

“路易斯维尔人。我们纯洁的少女时期是一道在那里度过的。我们那美丽纯洁的……”

“你在阳台上是不是跟尼克把心里话都讲了？”汤姆忽然质问。

“我讲了吗？”她看着我。“我好像不记得，不过我们大概谈到了日耳曼种族。对了，我可以肯定我们谈的是那个。它不知不觉就进入了我们的话题，你还没注意到

哩.....”

“别听到什么都信以为真，尼克，”他告诫我道。

我轻松地说我什么都没听到，几分钟之后我就起身告辞了。他们把我送到门口，两人并肩站在方方一片明亮的灯光里。我发动了汽车，忽然黛西命令式地喊道：“等等！”

“我忘了问你一件事，很重要的。我们听说你在西部跟一个姑娘订婚了。”

“不错，”汤姆和蔼地附和说，“我们听说你订婚了。”

“那是造谣诽谤。我太穷了。”

“可是我们听说了，”黛西坚持说，使我感到惊讶的是她又像花朵一样绽开了。“我们听三个人说过，所以一定是真的。”

我当然知道他们指的是什么事，但是我压根儿没有订婚。流言蜚语传播说我订了婚，这正是我之所以到东部来的一个原因。你不能因为怕谣言就和一个老朋友断绝来往，可是另一方面我也无意迫于谣言的压力就去结婚。

他们对我的关心倒很使我感动，也使他们不显得那么有钱与高不可攀了。虽然如此，在我开车回家的路上，我感到迷惑不解，还有点厌恶。我觉得，黛西应该做的事是抱着孩子跑出这座房子——可是显然她头脑里丝毫没有这种打算。至于汤姆，他“在纽约有个女人”这种事倒不足为怪，奇怪的是他会因为读了一本书而感到沮丧。不知什么东西在使他从陈腐的学说里摄取精神食粮，仿佛他那壮硕的体格的唯我主义已经不再能滋养他那颗唯我独尊的心了。

一路上小旅馆房顶上和路边汽油站门前已经是一片盛夏景象，鲜红的加油机一台台蹲在电灯光圈里。我回到我在西卵的住处，把车停在小车棚之后，在院子里一架闲置的刈草机上坐了一会儿。风已经停了，眼前是一片嘈杂；明亮的夜景，有鸟雀在树上拍翅膀的声音，还有大地的风箱使青蛙鼓足了气力发出的连续不断的风琴声。一只猫的侧影在月光中慢慢地移动，我掉过头去看它的时候，发觉我不是一个人——五十英尺之外一个人已经从我邻居的大厦的阴影里走了出来，现在两手插在口袋里站在那里仰望银白的星光。从他那悠闲的动作和他那两脚稳踏在草坪上的姿态可以看出这就是盖茨比先生本人，出来确定一下我们本地的天空哪一片是属于他的。

我打定了主意要招呼他。贝克小姐在吃饭时提到过他，那也可以算作介绍了。但我并没招呼他，因为他突然做了个动作，好像表示他满足于独自待着，——他朝着幽暗的海水把两只胳膊伸了出去，那样子真古怪，并且尽管我离他很远，我可以发誓他正在发抖。我也情不自禁地朝海上望去——什么都看不出来，除了一盏绿灯，又小又远，也许是一座码头的尽头。等我回头再去看盖茨比时，他已经不见了，于是我又独自待在不平静的黑夜里。

第二章

西卵和纽约之间大约一半路程的地方，汽车路匆匆忙忙跟铁路会合，它在铁路旁边跑上四分之一英里，为的是要躲开一片荒凉的地方。这是一个灰烬的山谷——一个离奇古怪的农场，在这里灰烬像麦子一样生长，长成小山小丘和奇形怪状的园子；在这里灰烬堆成房屋、烟囱和炊烟的形式，最后，经过超绝的努力，堆成一个个灰蒙蒙的人，隐隐约约地在走动，而且已经在尘土飞扬的空气中化为灰烬了。有时一列灰色的货车慢慢沿着一条看不见的轨道爬行，叽嘎一声鬼叫，停了下来，马上那

些灰蒙蒙的人就拖着铁铲一窝蜂拥上来，扬起一片尘土，让你看不到他们隐秘的活动。

但是，在这片灰蒙蒙的土地以及永远笼罩在它上空的一阵阵暗淡的尘土的上面，你过一会儿就看到T·J·埃克尔堡大夫的眼睛。埃克尔堡大夫的眼睛是蓝色的，庞大无比——瞳仁就有一码高。这双眼睛不是从一张脸上向外看，而是从架在一个不存在的鼻子上的一副硕大无朋的黄色眼镜向外看。显然是一个异想天开的眼科医生把它们竖在那儿的，为了招徕生意，扩大他在皇后区的业务，到后来大概他自己也永远闭上了眼睛，再不然就是撇下它们搬走了。但是，他留下的那两只眼睛，由于年深月久，日晒雨淋，油漆剥落，光彩虽不如前，却依然若有所思，阴郁地俯视着这片阴沉沉的灰堆。

灰烬谷一边有条肮脏的小河流过，每逢河上吊桥拉起让驳船通过，等候过桥的火车上的乘客就得盯着这片凄凉景色，时间长达半小时之久。平时火车在这里至少也要停一分钟，也正由于这个缘故，我才初次见到汤姆·布坎农的情妇。

他有个情妇，这是所有知道他的人都认定的事实。他的熟人都很气愤，因为他常常带着她上时髦的馆子，并且，让她在一张桌子旁坐下后，自己就走来走去，跟他认识的人拉呱。我虽然好奇，想看看她，可并不想和她见面——但是我见到她了。一天下午，我跟汤姆同行搭火车上纽约去。等我们在灰堆停下来时，他一骨碌跳了起来，抓住我的胳膊肘，简直是强迫我下了车。

“我们在这儿下车，”他断然地说，“我要你见见我的女朋友。”

大概他那天午饭时喝得够多的，因此他硬要我陪他的做法近乎暴力行为。他狂妄自大地认为，我在星期天下午似乎没有什么更有意思的事情可做。

我跟着他跨过一排刷得雪白的低低的铁路栅栏，然后沿着公路，在埃克尔堡大夫目不转睛的注视之下，往回走了一百码。眼前唯一的建筑物是一小排黄砖房子，坐落在这片荒原的边缘，大概是供应本地居民生活必需品的一条小型“主街”，左右隔壁一无所有。这排房子里有三家店铺，一家正在招租，另一家是通宵营业的饭馆，门前有一条炉渣小道；第三家是个汽车修理行——“乔治·B·威尔逊。修理汽车。买卖汽车。”——我跟着汤姆走了进去。

车行里毫无兴旺的气象，空空如也；只看见一辆汽车，一部盖满灰尘、破旧不堪的福特车，蹲在阴暗的角落里。我忽然想到，这间有名无实的车行莫不是个幌子，而楼上却掩藏着豪华温馨的房间，这时老板出现在一间办公室的门口，不停地在一块抹布上擦着手。他是个头发金黄、没精打采的人，脸上没有血色，样子还不难看。他一看见我们，那对浅蓝的眼睛就流露出一线暗淡的希望。

“哈啰，威尔逊，你这家伙，”汤姆说，一面嘻嘻哈哈地拍拍他的肩膀。“生意怎么样？”

“还可以，”威尔逊缺乏说服力地回答，“你什么时候才把那部车子卖给我？”

“下星期；我现在已经让我的司机在整修它了。”

“他干得很慢，是不是？”

“不，他干得不慢，”汤姆冷冷地说，“如果你这样看法，也许我还是把它拿到别处去卖为好。”

“我不是这个意思，”威尔逊连忙解释。“我只是说……”

他的声音逐渐消失，同时汤姆不耐烦地向车行四面张望。接着我听到楼梯上有脚步

的声音，过一会儿一个女人粗粗的身材挡住了办公室门口的光线。她年纪三十五六，身子胖胖的，可是如同有些女人一样，胖得很美。她穿了一件有油渍的深蓝双绉连衣裙，她的脸庞没有一丝一毫的美，但是她有一种显而易见的活力，仿佛她浑身的神经都在不停地燃烧。她慢慢地一笑。然后大摇大摆地从她丈夫身边穿过，仿佛他只是个幽灵，走过来跟汤姆握手，两眼直盯着他。接着她用舌头润了润嘴唇，头也不回就低低地、粗声粗气地对丈夫说：

“你怎么不拿两张椅子来，让人家坐下。”

“对，对，” 威尔逊连忙答应，随即向小办公室走去，他的身影马上就跟墙壁的水泥色打成一片了。一层灰白色的尘土笼罩着他深色的衣服和浅色的头发，笼罩着前后左右的一切——除了他的妻子之外。她走到了汤姆身边。

“我要见你，” 汤姆热切地说道，“搭下一班火车。”

“好吧。”

“我在车站下层报摊旁边等你。”

她点点头就从他身边走开，正赶上威尔逊从办公室里搬了两张椅子出来。

我们在公路上没人看见的地方等她。再过几天就是七月四号了，因此有一个灰蒙蒙的、骨瘦如柴的意大利小孩沿着铁轨在点放一排“鱼雷炮”。

“多可怕的地方，是不是，” 汤姆说，同时皱起眉头看着埃克尔堡大夫。

“糟透了。”

“换换环境对她有好处。”

“她丈夫没意见吗？”

“威尔逊？他以为她是到纽约去看她妹妹。他蠢得要命，连自己活着都不知道。”

就这样，汤姆·布坎农和他的情人还有我，三人一同上纽约去——或许不能说一同去，因为威尔逊太太很识相，她坐在另一节车厢里。汤姆做了这一点让步，以免引起可能在这趟车上的那些东卵人的反感。

她已经换上了一件棕色花布连衣裙，到了纽约汤姆扶她下车时那裙子紧紧地绷在她那肥阔的臀部。她在报摊上买了一份《纽约闲话》和一本电影杂志，又在车站药店里买了一瓶冷霜和一小瓶香水。在楼上，在那阴沉沉的、有回音的车道里，她放过了四辆出租汽车，然后才选中了一辆新车，车身是淡紫色的，里面坐垫是灰色的。我们坐着这辆车子驶出庞大的车站，开进灿烂的阳光里。可是马上她又猛然把头从车窗前掉过来，身子向前一探，敲敲前面的玻璃。

“我要买一只那种小狗。”她热切地说，“我要买一只养在公寓里。怪有意思的——养只狗。”

我们的车子倒退到一个白头发老头跟前，他长得活像约翰·D·洛克菲勒，真有点滑稽。他脖子上挂着一个篮子，里面蹲着十几条新出世的、难以确定品种的小狗崽子。

“它们是什么种？”威尔逊太太等老头走到出租汽车窗口就急着问道。

“各种都有。你要哪一种，太太？”

“我想要一条那种警犬；我看你不一定有那一种吧？”

老头怀疑地向竹篮子里望望，伸手进去捏着颈皮拎起一只来，小狗身子直扭。

“这又不是警犬，” 汤姆说。

“不是，这不一定是警犬，” 老头说，声音里流露出失望情绪。“多半是一只硬毛猎狗。” 他的手抚摸着狗背上棕色毛巾似的皮毛。“你瞧这个皮毛，很不错的皮毛，这条狗绝不会伤风感冒，给你找麻烦的。”

“我觉得它真好玩，” 威尔逊太太热烈地说，“多少钱？”

“这只狗吗？” 老头用赞赏的神气看着它。“这只狗要十美元。”

这只硬毛猎狗转了手，——毫无疑问它的血统里不知什么地方跟硬毛猎狗有过关系，不过它的爪子却白得出奇——随即安然躺进威尔逊太太的怀里。她欢天喜地抚摸着那不怕伤风着凉的皮毛。

“这是雄的还是雌的？” 她委婉地问。

“那只狗？那只狗是雄的。”

“是只母狗，” 汤姆斩钉截铁地说，“给你钱。拿去再买十只狗。”

我们坐着车子来到五号路，在这夏天星期日的下午，空气又温暖又柔和，几乎有田园风味。即使看见一大群雪白的绵羊突然从街角拐出来，我也不会感到惊奇。

“停一下，” 我说，“我得在这儿跟你们分手了。”

“不行，你不能走，” 汤姆连忙插话说。“茉特尔要生气的，要是你不上公寓去。是不是，茉特尔？”

“来吧，”她恳求我。“我打电话叫我妹妹凯瑟琳来。很多有眼力的人都说她真漂亮。”

“呃，我很想来，可是……”

我们继续前进，又掉头穿过中央公园，向西城一百多号街那边去，出租汽车在一五八号街一大排白色蛋糕似的公寓中的一幢前面停下。威尔逊太太向四周扫视一番，俨然一副皇后回宫的神气，一面捧起小狗和其他买来的东西，趾高气扬地走了进去。

“我要把麦基夫妇请上来，”我们乘电梯上楼时她宣布说。“当然，我还要打电话给我妹妹。”

他们的一套房间在最高一层——一间小起居室，一间小餐室，一间小卧室，还有一个洗澡间。起居室给一套大得很不相称的织锦靠垫的家具挤得满满当当的，以至于要在室内走动就要不断地绊倒在法国仕女在凡尔赛宫的花园里荡秋千的画面上。墙上挂的唯一的画是一张放得特大的相片，乍一看是一只母鸡蹲在一块模糊的岩石上。可是，从远处看去，母鸡化为一顶女帽，一位胖老太太笑咪咪地俯视着屋子。桌子上放着几份旧的《纽约闲话》，还有一本《名字叫彼得的西门》以及两三本百老汇的黄色小刊物。威尔逊太太首先关心的是狗。一个老大不情愿的开电梯的工人弄来了一只垫满稻草的盒子和一些牛奶，另外他又主动给买了一听又大又硬的狗饼干，有一块饼干一下午泡在一碟牛奶里，泡得稀巴烂。同时，汤姆打开了一个上锁的柜子的门，拿出一瓶威士忌来。

我一辈子只喝醉过两次，第二次就是那天下午；因此当时所发生的一切现在都好像在雾里一样，模糊不清，虽然公寓里直到八点以后还充满了明亮的阳光。威尔逊太

太坐在汤姆膝盖上给好几个人打了电话；后来香烟没了，我就出去到街角上的药店去买烟。我回来的时候，他们俩都不见了，于是我很识相地在起居室里坐下，看了《名字叫彼得的西门》中的一章——要么书写得太糟，要么威士忌使东西变得面目全非，因为我看不出一点名堂来。

汤姆和茉特尔（第一杯酒下肚之后威尔逊太太和我就彼此喊教名了）一重新露面，客人们就开始来敲公寓的门了。

她妹妹凯瑟琳是一个苗条而俗气的女人，年纪三十上下，一头浓密的短短的红头发，脸上粉搽得像牛奶一样白。她的眉毛是拔掉又重画过的，画的角度还俏皮一些，可是天然的力量却要恢复旧观，弄得她脸有点眉目不清。她走动的时候，不断发出丁当丁当的声音，因为许多假玉手镯在她胳膊上面上上下下地抖动。她像主人一样大模大样走了进来，对家具扫视了一番，仿佛东西是属于她的，使我怀疑她是否就住在这里。但是等我问她时，她放声大笑，大声重复了我的问题，然后告诉我她和一个女朋友同住在这家旅馆里。

麦基先生是住在楼下一层的一个白净的、女人气的男人。他刚刮过胡子，因为他颧骨上还有一点白肥皂沫。他和屋里每一个人打招呼时都毕恭毕敬。他告诉我他是“吃艺术饭”的，后来我才明白他是摄影师，墙上挂的威尔逊太太的母亲那幅像一片胚叶似的模糊不清的放大照片就是他摄制的。他老婆尖声尖气，没精打采，漂漂亮亮，可是非常讨厌。她得意洋洋地告诉我，自从他们结婚以来她丈夫已经替她照过一百二十七次相了。

威尔逊太太不知什么时候又换了一套衣服，现在穿的是一件精致的奶油色雪纺绸的连衣裙，是下午做客穿的那种，她在屋子里转来转去的时候，衣裙就不断地沙沙作响。由于衣服的影响，她的个性也跟着起了变化。早先在车行里那么显著的活力变

成了目空一切的hauteur。她的笑声、她的姿势、她的言谈，每一刻都变得越来越矫揉造作，同时随着她逐渐膨胀，她周围的屋子就显得越来越小，后来，她好像在烟雾弥漫的空气中坐在一个吱吱嘎嘎的木轴上不停地转动。

“亲爱的，”她装腔作势地大声告诉她妹妹。“这年头不论是谁都想欺骗你。他们脑子里想的只有钱。上星期我找了个女的来看看我的脚，等她把账单给我，你还以为她给我割了阑尾哩。”

“那女人姓什么？”麦基太太问。

“埃伯哈特太太。她经常到人家里去替人看脚。”

“我喜欢你这件衣服，”麦基太太说，“我觉得它真漂亮。”

威尔逊太太不屑地把眉毛一扬，否定了这句恭维话。

“这只是一件破烂的旧货，”她说。“我不在乎自己是什么样子的時候，我就把它往身上一套。”

“可是穿在你身上就显得特别漂亮，如果你懂得我的意思的话，”麦基太太紧跟着说。“只要切斯特能把你这个姿势拍下来，我想这一定会是一幅杰作。”

我们大家都默默地看着威尔逊太太，她把一缕头发从眼前掠开，笑吟吟地看着我们大家。麦基先生歪着头，目不转睛地端详着她，然后又伸出一只手在面前慢慢地来回移动。

“我得改换光线，”他过了一会儿说道，“我很想把面貌的立体感表现出来。我还要把后面的头发全部摄进来。”

“我认为根本不应该改换光线，” 麦基太太大声说。“我认为……”

她丈夫“嘘”了一声，于是我们大家又都把目光转向摄影的题材，这时汤姆·布坎农出声地打了一个呵欠，站了起来。

“你们麦基家两口子喝点什么吧，” 他说。“再搞点冰和矿泉水来，茉特尔，不然的话大家都睡着了。”

“我早就叫那小子送冰来了。” 茉特尔把眉毛一扬，对下等人的懒惰无能表示绝望。“这些人！你非得老盯着他们不可。”

她看看我，忽然莫名其妙地笑了起来。接着她蹦蹦跳跳跑到小狗跟前，欢天喜地地亲亲它，然后又大摇大摆地走进厨房，那神气就好似那里有十几个大厨师在听候她的吩咐。

“我在长岛那边拍过几张好的，” 麦基先生断言。

汤姆茫然地看看他。

“有两幅我们配了镜框挂在楼下。”

“两幅什么？” 汤姆追问。

“两幅习作。其中一幅我称之为《蒙涛角——海鸥》，另一幅叫《蒙涛角——大海》。”

那位名叫凯瑟琳的妹妹在沙发上我的身边坐下。

“你也住在长岛那边吗？” 她问我。

“我住在西卵。”

“是吗？我到那儿参加过一次聚会，大约一个月以前。在一个姓盖茨比的人的家里。你认识他吗？”

“我就住在他隔壁。”

“噢，人家说他是德国威廉皇帝的侄儿，或者什么别的亲戚。他的钱都是那么来的。”

“真的吗？”

她点了点头。

“我害怕他。我可不愿意落到他手里。”

关于我邻居的这段引人入胜的报道，由于麦基太太突然伸手指着凯瑟琳而被打断了。

“切斯特，我觉得你满可以给她拍一张好的，”她大声嚷嚷，可是麦基先生光是懒洋洋地点了点头，把注意力又转向汤姆。

“我很想在长岛多搞点业务，要是有人介绍的话。我唯一的要求就是他们帮我开个头。”

“问茉特尔好了，”汤姆哈哈一笑说，正好威尔逊太太端个托盘走了进来。“她可以给你写封介绍信，是不是，茉特尔？”

“干什么？”她吃惊地问道。

“你给麦基写一封介绍信去见你丈夫，他就可以给他拍几张特写。”他嘴唇不出声地动了一会儿，接着胡诌道，“《乔治·B·威尔逊在油泵前》，或者诸如此类的玩意。”

凯瑟琳凑到我耳边，跟我小声说：

“他们俩谁都受不了自己的那口子。”

“是吗？”

“受不了。”她先看看茉特尔，又看看汤姆。“依我说，既然受不了，何必还在一起过下去呢？要是我，我就离婚，然后马上重新结婚。”

“她也不喜欢威尔逊吗？”

对这个问题的答复是出乎意外的。它来自茉特尔，因为她凑巧听见了问题，而她讲的话是又粗暴又不干净的。

“你瞧，”凯瑟琳得意洋洋地大声说，她又压低了嗓门。“使他们不能结婚的其实是他老婆。她是天主教徒，那些人是不赞成离婚的。”

黛西并不是天主教徒，因此这个煞费苦心的谎言使我有点震惊。

“哪天他们结了婚，”凯瑟琳接着说，“他们准备到西部去住一些时候，等风波过去再回来。”

“更稳妥的办法是到欧洲去。”

“哦，你喜欢欧洲吗？”她出其不意地叫了起来。“我刚从蒙特卡洛回来。”

“真的吗？”

“就在去年，我和另外一个姑娘一起去的。”

“待了很久吗？”

“没有，我们只去了蒙特卡洛就回来了。我们是取道马赛去的。我们动身的时候带了一千二百多美元，可是两天之内就在赌场小房间里让人骗光了。我们回来一路上吃的苦头可不少，我对你说吧。天哪，我恨死那城市了。”

窗外，天空在夕照中显得格外柔和，像蔚蓝的地中海一样。这时麦基太太尖锐的声音把我唤回到屋子里来。

“我差点也犯错误，”她精神抖擞地大声说，“我差点嫁给一个追了我好几年的犹太小子。我知道他配不上我。大家都对我说：‘露西尔，那个人比你差远了。’可是，如果我没碰上切斯特，他保险会把我搞到手的。”

“不错，可是你听我说，”茉特尔·威尔逊说，一面不停地摇头晃脑。“好在你并没嫁给他啊。”

“我知道我没嫁给他。”

“但是，我可嫁给了他，”茉特尔含糊其辞地说。“这就是你的情况和我的情况不同的地方。”

“你为什么嫁给他呢，茉特尔？”凯瑟琳质问道，“也没有人强迫你。”

茉特尔考虑了一会儿。

“我嫁给了他，是因为我以为他是个上等人，”她最后说，“我以为他还有点教养，不料他连舔我的鞋都不配。”

“你有一阵子爱他爱得发疯，”凯瑟琳说。

“爱他爱得发疯！”茉特尔不相信地喊道，“谁说我爱他爱得发疯啦？我从来没爱过他，就像我没爱过那个人一样。”

她突然指着她，于是大家都用责备的目光看着她。她竭力做出一副样子表示她并没指望什么人爱她。

“我干的唯一发疯的事是跟他结了婚。我马上就我知道我犯了错误。他借了人家一套做客的衣服穿着结婚，还从来不告诉我，后来有一天他不在家，那人来讨还衣服。‘哦，这套衣服是你的吗？’我说。‘这还是我头一回听说哩。’但是我把衣服给了他，然后我躺到床上，号啕大哭，整整哭了一下午。”

“她实在应当离开他，”凯瑟琳又跟我说下去。“他们在那汽车行楼顶上住了十一年了。汤姆还是她第一个相好的哩。”

那瓶威士忌——第二瓶了——此刻大家都喝个不停，唯有凯瑟琳除外，她“什么都不喝也感到飘飘然”。汤姆按铃把看门的喊来，叫他去买一种出名的三明治，吃了可以抵得上一顿晚餐的。我想到外面去，在柔和的暮色中向东朝公园走过去，但每次我起身告辞，都被卷入一阵吵闹刺耳的争执中，结果就仿佛有绳子把我拉回到椅子上。然而我们这排黄澄澄的窗户高踞在城市的上空，一定给暮色苍茫的街道上一位观望的过客增添了一点人生的秘密，同时我也可以看到他，一面在仰望一面在寻思。我既身在其中又身在其外，对人生的千变万化既感到陶醉，同时又感到厌恶。

茉特尔把她自己的椅子拉到我椅子旁边，忽然之间她吐出的热气朝我喷来，她絮絮叨叨讲起了她与汤姆初次相逢的故事。

“事情发生在两个面对面的小座位上，就是火车上一向剩下的最后两个座位。我是上纽约去看我妹妹，在她那儿过夜。他穿了一身礼服，一双漆皮鞋，我就忍不住老是看他，可是每次他一看我，我只好假装在看他头顶上的广告。我们走进车站时，他紧挨在我身边，他那雪白的衬衫前胸蹭着我的胳膊，于是我跟他说我可要叫警察了，但他明知我在说假话。我神魂颠倒，跟他上了一辆出租汽车，还以为是上了地铁哩。我心里翻来覆去想的只有一句话：‘你又不能永远活着。你又能永远活着。’”

她回过头来跟麦基太太讲话，屋子里充满了她那不自然的笑声。

“亲爱的，”她喊道，“我这件衣服穿过之后就送给你。明天我得去另买一件。我要把所有要办的事情开个单子。按摩、烫发、替小狗买条项圈，买一个那种有弹簧的、小巧玲珑的烟灰缸，还要给妈妈的坟上买一个挂黑丝结的假花圈，可以摆一个夏天的那种。我一定得写个单子，免得我忘掉要做哪些事。”

已经九点钟了——一转眼我再看表时发觉已经十点了。麦基先生倒在椅子上睡着了，两手握拳放在大腿上，好像一张活动家的相片。我掏出手帕，把他脸上那一小片叫我一下午都看了难受的干肥皂沫擦掉。

小狗坐在桌子上，两眼在烟雾中盲目地张望，不时轻轻地哼着。屋子里的人一会儿不见了，一会儿又重新出现，商量到什么地方去，然后又找不着对方，找来找去，发现彼此就在几尺之内。快到半夜的时候，汤姆·布坎农和威尔逊太太面对面站着争吵，声音很激动，争的是威尔逊太太有没有权利提黛西的名字。

“黛西！黛西！黛西！”威尔逊太太大喊大叫。“我什么时候想叫就叫！黛西！黛西……”

汤姆·布坎农动作敏捷，伸出手一巴掌打破了威尔逊太太的鼻子。

接着，浴室满地都是血淋淋的毛巾，只听见女人骂骂咧咧的声音，同时在一片混乱之中，还夹有断断续续痛楚的哀号。麦基先生打盹醒了，懵懵懂懂地就朝门口走。他走了一半路，又转过身来看着屋子里的景象发呆——他老婆和凯瑟琳一面骂一面哄，同时手里拿着急救用的东西跌跌撞撞地在拥挤的家具中间来回跑，还有躺在沙发上的那个凄楚的人形，一面血流不止，一面还想把一份《纽约闲话》报铺在织锦椅套上的凡尔赛风景上面。然后麦基先生又掉转身子，继续走出门去。我从灯架上取下我的帽子，也跟着走了出去。

“改天过来一道吃午饭吧。”我们在电梯里哼哼唧唧地往下走的时候，他提议说。

“什么地方？”

“随便什么地方？”

“别碰电梯开关，”开电梯的工人不客气地说。

“对不起，”麦基先生神气十足地说，“我还不知道我碰了。”

“好吧，”我表示同意说，“我一定奉陪。”

……我正站在麦基床边，而他坐在两层床单中间，身上只穿着内衣，手里捧着一本大相片簿。

“《美人与野兽》……《寂寞》……《小店老马》……《布鲁克林大桥》……”

后来我半睡半醒躺在宾夕法尼亚车站下层很冷的候车室里，一面盯着刚出的《论坛报》，一面等候清早四点钟的那班火车。

第三章

整个夏天的夜晚都有音乐声从我邻居家传过来。在他蔚蓝的花园里，男男女女像飞蛾一般在笑语、香槟和繁星中间来来往往。下午涨潮的时候，我看着他的客人从他的木筏的跳台上跳水，或是躺在他私人海滩的热沙上晒太阳，同时他的两艘小汽艇破浪前进，拖着滑水板驶过翻腾的浪花。每逢周末，他的罗尔斯—罗伊斯轿车就成了公共汽车，从早晨九点到深更半夜往来城里接送客人，同时他的旅行车也像一只轻捷的黄硬壳虫那样去火车站接所有的班车。每星期一，八个仆人，包括一个临时园丁，整整苦干一天，用许多拖把、板刷、榔头、修枝剪来收拾前一晚的残局。

每星期五，五箱橙子和柠檬从纽约一家水果行送到；每星期一，这些橙子和柠檬变成一座半拉半拉的果皮堆成的小金字塔从他的后门运出去。他厨房里有一架榨果汁机，半小时之内可以榨两百只橙子，只要男管家用大拇指把一个按钮按两百次就行了。

至少每两周一次，大批包办筵席的人从城里下来，带来好几百英尺帆布帐篷和无数的彩色电灯，足以把盖茨比巨大的花园布置得像一棵圣诞树。自助餐桌上各色冷盘琳琅满目，一只只五香火腿周围摆满了五花八门的色拉、烤得金黄的乳猪和火鸡。大厅里面，设起了一个装着一根真的铜杆的酒吧，备有各种杜松子酒和烈性酒，还有各种早已罕见的甘露酒，大多数女客年纪太轻，根本分不清哪个是哪个。

七点以前乐队到达，绝不是什么五人小乐队，而是配备齐全的整班人马，双簧管、长号、萨克斯管、大小提琴、短号、短笛、高低音铜鼓，应有尽有。游泳的客人最

后一批已经从海滩上进来，现在正在楼上换衣服；纽约来的轿车五辆一排停在车道上，同时所有的厅堂、客室、阳台已经都是五彩缤纷，女客们的发型争奇斗妍，披的纱巾是卡斯蒂尔人做梦也想不到的。酒吧那边生意兴隆，同时一盘盘鸡尾酒传送到外面花园里的每个角落，到后来整个空气里充满了欢声笑语，充满了脱口而出、转眼就忘的打趣和介绍，充满了彼此始终不知姓名的女太太们之间亲热无比的会见。

大地蹒跚着离开太阳，电灯显得更亮，此刻乐队正在奏黄色鸡尾酒会音乐，于是大合唱般的人声又提高了一个音调。笑声每时每刻都变得越来越容易，毫无节制地倾泻出来，只要一句笑话就会引起哄然大笑。人群的变化越来越快，忽而随着新来的客人而增大，忽而分散后又立即重新组合；已经有一些人在东飘西荡——脸皮厚的年轻姑娘在比较稳定的人群中间钻进钻出，一会儿在片刻的欢腾中成为一群人注意的中心，一会儿又得意洋洋在不断变化的灯光下穿过变幻不定的面孔、声音和色彩扬长而去。

忽然间，这些吉卜赛人式的姑娘中有一个，满身珠光宝气，一伸手就抓来一杯鸡尾酒，一口干下去壮壮胆子，然后手舞足蹈，一个人跳到篷布舞池中间去表演。片刻的寂静，乐队指挥殷勤地为她改变了拍子，随后突然响起了一阵叽叽喳喳的说话声，因为有谣言传开，说她是速演剧团的吉尔德·格雷的替角。晚会正式开始了。

我相信那天晚上我第一次到盖茨比家去时，我是少数几个真正接到请帖的客人之一。人们并不是邀请来的——他们是自己来的。他们坐上汽车，车子把他们送到长岛，后来也不知怎么的他们总是出现在盖茨比的门口。一到之后总会有什么认识盖茨比的人给他们介绍一下，从此他们的言谈行事就像在娱乐场所一样了。有时候他们从来到走根本没见过盖茨比，他们怀着一片至诚前来赴会，这一点就可以算一张

入场券了。

我确实是受到邀请的。那个星期六一清早，一个身穿绿蓝色制服的司机穿过我的草地，为他主人送来一封措辞非常客气的请柬，上面写道：如蒙我光临当晚他的“小小聚会”，盖茨比当感到不胜荣幸。他已经看到我几次，并且早就打算趋访，但由于种种特殊原因未能如愿——杰伊·盖茨比签名，笔迹很神气。

晚上七点一过，我身穿一套白法兰绒便装走过去到他的草坪上，很不自在地在一群我不认识的人中间晃来晃去——虽然偶尔也有一个我在区间火车上见过的面孔。我马上注意到客人中夹杂着不少年轻的英国人；个个衣着整齐，个个面有饥色，个个都在低声下气地跟殷实的美国人谈话。我敢说他们都在推销什么——或是债券，或是保险，或是汽车。他们最起码都揪心地意识到，近在眼前就有唾手可得的钱，并且相信，只要几句话说得投机，钱就到手了。

我一到之后就设法去找主人，可是问了两三个人他在哪里，他们都大为惊异地瞪着我，同时矢口否认知道他的行踪，我只好悄悄地向供应鸡尾酒的桌子溜过去——整个花园里只有这个地方，一个单身汉可以留连一下而不显得无聊和孤独。

我百无聊赖，正准备喝个酩酊大醉，这时乔丹·贝克从屋里走了出来，站在大理石台阶最上一级，身体微向后仰，用轻藐的神气俯瞰着花园。

不管人家欢迎不欢迎，我觉得实在非依附一个人不可，不然的话，我恐怕要跟过往的客人寒暄起来了。

“哈啰！”我大喊一声，朝她走去。我的声音在花园里听上去似乎响得很不自然。

“我猜你也许会来的，”等我走到跟前，她心不在焉地答道，“我记得你住在隔

壁.....”

她不带感情地拉拉我的手，作为她答应马上再来理会我的表示，同时去听在台阶下面站住的两个穿着一样的黄色连衣裙的姑娘讲话。

“哈啰！”她们同声喊道，“可惜你没赢。”

这说的是高尔夫球比赛。她在上星期的决赛中输掉了。

“你不知道我们是谁，”两个穿黄衣的姑娘中的一个说，“可是大约一个月以前我们在这儿见过面。”

“你们后来染过头发了，”乔丹说，我听了一惊，但两个姑娘却已经漫不经心地走开了，因此她这句话说给早升的月亮听了，月亮和晚餐的酒菜一样，无疑也是从包办酒席的人的篮子里拿出来的。乔丹用她那纤细的、金黄色的手臂挽着我的手臂，我们走下了台阶，在花园里闲逛。一盘鸡尾酒在暮色苍茫中飘到我们面前，我们就在一张桌子旁坐下，同座的还有那两个穿黄衣的姑娘和三个男的，介绍给我们的时候名字全含含糊糊一带而过。

“你常来参加这些晚会吗？”乔丹问她旁边的那个姑娘。

“我上次来就是见到你的那一次，”姑娘回答，声音是机灵而自信的。她又转身问她的朋友，“你是不是也一样，露西尔？”

露西尔也是一样。

“我喜欢来，”露西尔说。“我从来不在乎干什么，只要我玩得痛快就行。上次我来这里，我把衣服在椅子上撕破了，他就问了我的姓名住址——不出一个星期我收

到克罗里公司送来一个包裹，里面是一件新的晚礼服。”

“你收下了吗？” 乔丹问。

“我当然收下了。我本来今晚准备穿的，可是它胸口太大，非改不可。衣服是淡蓝色的，镶着淡紫色的珠子。二百六十五美元。”

“一个人肯干这样的事真有点古怪，” 另外那个姑娘热切地说，“他不愿意得罪任何人。”

“谁不愿意？” 我问。

“盖茨比。有人告诉我……”

两个姑娘和乔丹诡秘地把头靠到一起。

“有人告诉我，人家认为他杀过一个人。”

我们大家都感到十分惊异。三位先生也把头伸到前面，竖起耳朵来听。

“我想并不是那回事，” 露西尔不以为然地分辩道，“多半是因为在大战时他当过德国间谍。”

三个男的当中有一个点头表示赞同。

“我也听过一个人这样说，这人对他一清二楚，是从小和他一起在德国长大的，” 他肯定无疑地告诉我们。

“噢，不对，” 第一个姑娘又说，“不可能是那样，因为大战期间他是在美国军队里。” 由于我们又倾向于听信她的话，她又兴致勃勃地把头伸到前面。“你只要趁

他以为没有人看他时看他一眼。我敢打赌他杀过一个人。”

她眯起眼睛，哆嗦了起来。露西尔也在哆嗦。我们大家掉转身来，四面张望去找盖茨比。有些人早就认为这个世界上没有什么需要避讳的事情，现在谈起他来却这样窃窃私语，这一点也足以证明他引起了人们何等浪漫的遐想了。

第一顿晚饭——午夜后还有一顿——此刻开出来了，乔丹邀我去和花园那边围着一张桌子坐的她的一伙朋友坐在一起。一共有三对夫妇，外加一个陪同乔丹来的男大学生，此人死气白赖，说起话来老是旁敲侧击，并且显然认为乔丹早晚会或多或少委身于他的。这伙人不到处转悠，而正襟危坐，自成一体，并且俨然自封为庄重的农村贵族的代表——东卵屈尊光临西卵，而又小心翼翼提防它那灯红酒绿的欢乐。

“咱们走开吧，”乔丹低声地讲，这时已经莫名其妙地浪费了半个钟头。“这里对我来说是太斯文了。”

我们站了起来，她解释说我们要去找主人；她就是因为我还从来没见过他，这使我颇感局促不安。那位大学生点点头，神情既玩世不恭，又闷闷不乐。

我们先到酒吧间去张了一张，那儿挤满了人，可盖茨比并不在那里。她从台阶上头向下看，找不到他，他也不在阳台上。我们怀着希望推开一扇很神气的门，走进了一间高高的哥特式图书室，四壁镶的是英国雕花橡木，大有可能是从海外某处古迹原封不动地拆过来的。

一个矮矮胖胖的中年男人，戴着老大的一副猫头鹰式眼镜，正醉醺醺地坐在一张大桌子的边上，迷迷糊糊目不转睛地看着书架上一排排的书。我们一走进去他就兴奋地转过身来，把乔丹从头到脚打量了一番。

“你觉得怎么样？”他冒冒失失地问道。

“关于什么？”

他把手向书架一扬。

“关于那个。其实你也不必仔细看了，我已经仔细看过。它们都是真的。”

“这些书吗？”

他点点头。

“绝对是真的——一页一页的，什么都有。我起先还以为大概是好看的空书壳子。事实上，它们绝对是真的。一页一页的什么——等等！我拿给你们瞧。”

他想当然地认为我们不相信，急忙跑到书橱前面，拿回来一本《斯托达德演说集》卷一。

“瞧！”他得意洋洋地嚷道，“这是一本地地道道的印刷品。它真把我蒙住了。这家伙简直是个贝拉斯科。真是巧夺天工。多么一丝不苟！多么逼真！而且知道见好就收——并没裁开纸页。你还要怎样？你还指望什么？”

他从我手里把那本书一把夺走，急急忙忙在书架上放回原处，一面叽咕着说什么假使一块砖头被挪开，整个图书室就有可能塌掉。

“谁带你们来的？”他问道，“还是不请自到的？我是有人带我来的。大多数客人都是别人带来的。”

乔丹很机灵，很高兴地看着他，但并没有答话。

“我是一位姓罗斯福的太太带来的，”他接着说，“克劳德·罗斯福太太。你们认识她吗？我昨天晚上不知在什么地方碰上她的。我已经醉了个把星期了，我以为在图书室里坐一会儿可以醒醒酒的。”

“有没有醒？”

“醒了一点，我想。我还不敢说。我在这儿刚待了一个钟头。我跟你们讲过这些书吗？它们都是真的。它们是……”

“你告诉过我们了。”

我们庄重地和他握握手，随即回到外边去。

此刻花园里篷布上有人在跳舞；有老头子推着年轻姑娘向后倒退，无止无休地绕着难看的圈子；有高傲的男女抱在一起按时髦的舞步扭来扭去，守在一个角落里跳——还有许许多多单身姑娘在作单人舞蹈，或者帮乐队弹一会儿班卓琴或者敲一会儿打击乐器。到了午夜欢闹更甚。一位有名的男高音唱了意大利文歌曲，还有一位声名狼藉的女低音唱了爵士音乐，还有人在两个节目之间在花园里到处表演“绝技”，同时一阵阵欢乐而空洞的笑声响彻夏夜的天空。一对双胞胎——原来就是那两个黄衣姑娘——演了一出化装的娃娃戏，同时香槟一杯杯的端出来，杯子比洗手指用的小碗还要大。月亮升得更高了，海湾里飘着一副三角形的银色天秤，随着草坪上班卓琴铿锵的琴声微微颤动。

我仍然和乔丹·贝克在一起。我们坐的一张桌上还有一位跟我年纪差不多的男子和一个吵吵闹闹的小姑娘，她动不动就忍不住要放声大笑。我现在玩得也挺开心了。我已经喝了两大碗香槟，因此这片景色在我眼前变成了一种意味深长的、根本性的、奥妙的东西。

在文娱节目中间休息的时候，那个男的看着我微笑。

“您很面熟，”他很客气地说。“战争期间您不是在第一师吗？”

“正是啊。我在步兵二十八连。”

“我在十六连，直到一九一八年六月。我刚才就知道我以前在哪儿见过您的。”

我们谈了一会儿法国的一些阴雨、灰暗的小村庄。显而易见他就住在附近，因为他告诉我他刚买了一架水上飞机，并且准备明天早晨去试飞一下。

“愿意跟我一块去吗，老兄？就在海湾沿着岸边转转。”

“什么时候？”

“随便什么时候，对你合适就行。”

我已经话到了嘴边想问他的名字，这时乔丹掉转头来朝我一笑。

“现在玩得快活吧？”她问。

“好多了。”我又掉转脸对着我的新交。“这对我来说是个奇特的晚会。我连主人都还没见到哩。我就住在那边……”我朝着远处看不见的树篱笆把手一挥。“这位姓盖茨比的派他的司机过来送了一份请帖。”

他朝我望了一会儿，似乎没听懂我的话。

“我就是盖茨比，”他突然说。

“什么！”我叫了一声，“噢，真对不起。”

“我还以为你知道哩，老兄。我恐怕不是个很好的主人。”

他心领神会地一笑——还不止心领神会。这是极为罕见的笑容，其中含有永久的善意的表情，这是你一辈子也不过遇见四五次的。它面对——或者似乎面对——整个永恒的世界一刹那，然后就凝注在你身上，对你表现出不可抗拒的偏爱。他了解你恰恰到你本人希望被了解的程度，相信你如同你乐于相信你自己那样，并且教你放心他对你的印象正是你最得意时希望给予别人的印象。恰好在这一刻他的笑容消失了——于是我看着的不过是一个风度翩翩的年轻汉子，三十一二岁年纪，说起话来文质彬彬，几乎有点可笑。在他作自我介绍之前不久，我有一个强烈的印象，觉得他说话字斟句酌。

差不多在盖茨比先生说明自己身份的那一刻，一个男管家急急忙忙跑到他跟前报告他芝加哥有长途电话找他。他微微欠身道歉，把我们大家——包括在内。

“你想要什么尽管开口，老兄，”他恳切地对我说，“对不起，过会儿再来奉陪。”

他走开之后，我马上转向乔丹——迫不及待地要告诉她我感到的惊异。我本来以为盖茨比先生是个红光满面、肥头大耳的中年人。

“他是谁？”我急切地问，“你可知道？”

“他就是一个姓盖茨比的人呗。”

“我是问他是哪儿来的？他又是干什么的？”

“现在你也琢磨起这个题目来了，”她厌倦地笑道，“唔，他告诉过我他上过牛津大学。”

一个模糊的背景开始在他身后出现，但是随着她的下一句话又立即消失了。

“可是，我并不相信。”

“为什么不信？”

“我不知道，”她固执地说，“我就是不相信他上过牛津。”

她的语气之中有点什么使我想起另外那个姑娘说的“我想他杀过一个人”，其结果是打动了我的好奇心。随便说盖茨比出身于路易斯安那州的沼泽地区也好，出身于纽约东城南区也好，我都可以毫无疑问地接受。那是可以理解的。但是年纪轻的人不可能——至少我这个孤陋寡闻的乡下人认为他们不可能——不知从什么地方悄悄地出现，在长岛海湾买下一座宫殿式的别墅。

“不管怎样，他举行大型宴会，”乔丹像一般城里人一样不屑于谈具体细节，所以改换了话题。“而我也喜欢大型宴会。这样亲热得很。在小的聚会上，三三两两谈心倒不可能。”

大鼓轰隆隆一阵响，接着突然传来乐队指挥的声音，盖过花园里嘈杂的人声。

“女士们先生们，”他大声说，“应盖茨比先生的要求，我们现在为各位演奏弗拉迪米尔·托斯托夫先生的最新作品，这部作品五月里在卡内基音乐厅曾经引起那么多人注意。各位看报就知道那是轰动一时的事件。”他带着轻松而居高临下的神气微微一笑，又加了一句：“可真叫轰动！”引得大家都放声大笑。

“这支乐曲，”他最后用洪亮的声音说，“叫做《弗拉迪米尔·托斯托夫的爵士音乐世界史》。”

托斯托夫先生这个乐曲是怎么回事，我没有注意到，因为演奏一开始，我就一眼看到了盖茨比单独一个人站在大理石台阶上面，用满意的目光从这一群人看到那一群人。他那晒得黑黑的皮肤很漂亮地紧绷在脸上，他那短短的头发看上去好像是每天都修剪似的。我看不出他身上有什么诡秘的迹象。我纳闷是否他不喝酒这个事实有助于把他跟他的客人们截然分开，因为我觉得随着沆瀣一气的欢闹的高涨，他却变得越发端庄了。等到《爵士音乐世界史》演奏完毕，有的姑娘像小哈巴狗一样乐滋滋地靠在男人肩膀上，有的姑娘开玩笑地向后晕倒在男人怀抱里，甚至倒进人群里，明知反正有人会把她们托住——可是没有人晕倒在盖茨比身上，也没有法国式的短发碰到盖茨比的肩头，也没有人组织四人合唱团来拉盖茨比加入。

“对不起。”

盖茨比的男管家忽然站在我们身旁。

“贝克小姐？”他问道，“对不起，盖茨比先生想单独跟您谈谈。”

“跟我谈？”她惊奇地大声说。

“是的，小姐。”

她慢慢地站了起来，惊愕地对我扬了扬眉毛，然后跟着男管家向房子走过去。我注意到她穿晚礼服，穿所有的衣服，都像穿运动服一样——她的动作有一种矫健的姿势，仿佛她当初就是在空气清新的早晨在高尔夫球场上学走路的。

我独自一人，时间已快两点了。有好一会儿，从阳台上上面一间长长的、有许多窗户的房间里传来了一阵阵杂乱而引人入胜的声音。乔丹的那位大学生此刻正在和两个歌舞团的舞女大谈助产术，央求我去加入，可是我溜掉了，走到室内去。

大房间里挤满了人。穿黄衣的姑娘有一个在弹钢琴，她身旁站着一个高高的红发少妇，是从一个有名的歌舞团来的，正在那里唱歌。她已经喝了大量的香槟，在她唱歌的过程中她又不合时宜地认定一切都非常非常悲惨——她不仅在唱，而且还在哭。每逢曲中有停顿的地方，她就用抽抽噎噎的哭声来填补，然后又用震颤的女高音继续去唱歌词。眼泪沿着她的面颊往下流，——可不是畅通无阻地流，因为眼泪一碰到画得浓浓的睫毛之后变成了黑墨水，像两条黑色的小河似的慢慢地继续往下流。有人开玩笑，建议她唱脸上的那些音符，她听了这话把两手向上一甩，倒在一张椅子上，醉醺醺地呼呼大睡起来。

“她刚才跟一个自称是她丈夫的人打过一架，”我身旁一个姑娘解释说。

我向四周看看，剩下的女客现在多半都在跟她们所谓的丈夫吵架。连乔丹的那一伙，从东卵来的那四位，也由于意见不合而四分五裂了。男的当中有一个正在劲头十足地跟一个年轻的女演员交谈，他的妻子起先还保持尊严，装得满不在乎，想一笑置之，到后来完全垮了，就采取侧面攻击——不时突然出现在他身边，像一条愤怒的衲脊蛇，向他耳中嘶道：“你答应过的！”

舍不得回家的并不限于任性的男客。穿堂里此刻有两个毫无醉意的男客和他们怒气冲天的太太。两位太太略微提高了嗓子在互相表示同情。

“每次他一看见我玩得开心他就要回家。”

“我这辈子从来没听过这么自私的事。”

“我们总是第一个走。”

“我们也是一样。”

“不过，今晚我们几乎是最后了，”两个男的有一个怯生生地说。“乐队半个钟头以前就走了。”

尽管两位太太一致认为这种恶毒心肠简直难以置信，这场纠纷终于在一阵短短的揪斗中结束，两位太太都被抱了起来，两腿乱踢，消失在黑夜里。

我在穿堂里等我帽子的时候，图书室的门开了，乔丹·贝克和盖茨比一同走了出来。他还在跟她说最后一句话，可是这时有几个人走过来和他告别，他原先热切的态度陡然收敛，变成了拘谨。

乔丹那一伙人从阳台上不耐烦地喊她，可是她还逗留了片刻和我握手。

“我刚才听到一件最惊人的事情，”她出神地小声说，“我们在那里边待了多久？”

“哦，个把钟头。”

“这事……太惊人了，”她出神地重复说。“可是我发过誓不告诉别人，而我现在已经在逗你了。”她对着我的脸轻轻打了个呵欠。“有空请过来看我……电话簿……西古奈·霍华德太太名下……我的姑妈……”她一边说一边匆匆离去——她活泼地挥了一下那只晒得黑黑的手表示告别，然后就消失在门口她那一伙人当中了。

我觉得怪难为情的，第一次来就待得这么晚，于是走到包围着盖茨比的最后几位客人那边去。我想要解释一下我一来就到处找过他，同时向他道歉刚才在花园里当面都不认识。

“没有关系，”他恳切地嘱咐我。“别放在心上，老兄。”这个亲热的称呼还比不上非常友好地拍拍我肩膀的那只手所表示的亲热。“别忘了明天早上九点我们要乘

水上飞机上天哩。”

接着男管家来了，站在他背后。

“先生，费城有长途电话请您说话。”

“好，就来。告诉他们我就来。……晚安。”

“晚安。”

“晚安。”他微微一笑。突然之间，我待到最后才走，这其中好像含有愉快的深意，仿佛他是一直希望如此的。“晚安，老兄……晚安。”

可是，当我走下台阶时，我看到晚会还没有完全结束。离大门五十英尺，十几辆汽车的前灯照亮了一个不寻常的、闹哄哄的场面。在路旁的小沟里，右边向上，躺着一辆新的小轿车，可是一只轮子撞掉了。这辆车离开盖茨比的车道还不到两分钟，一堵墙的突出部分是造成车轮脱落的原因，现在有五六个好奇的司机在围观。可是，由于他们让自己的车子挡住了路，后面车子上的司机已经按了好久喇叭，一片刺耳的噪音更增添了整个场面本来就很严重的混乱。

一个穿着长风衣的男人已经从撞坏的车子里出来，此刻站在大路中间，从车子看到轮胎，又从轮胎看到旁观的人，脸上带着愉快而迷惑不解的表情。

“请看！”他解释道，“车子开到沟里去了。”

这个事实使他感到不胜惊奇。我先听出了那不平常的惊奇的口吻，然后认出了这个人——就是早先光顾盖茨比图书室的那一位。

“怎么搞的？”

他耸了耸肩膀。

“我对机械一窍不通，”他肯定地说。

“到底怎么搞的？你撞到墙上去了吗？”

“别问我，”“猫头鹰眼”说，把事情推脱得一干二净。“我不大懂开车——几乎一无所知。事情发生了，我就知道这一点。”

“既然你车子开得不好，那么你晚上就不应当试着开车嘛。”

“可是我连试也没试，”他气愤愤地解释。“我连试也没试啊。”

旁观的人听了都惊愕得说不出话来。

“你想自杀吗？”

“幸亏只是一只轮子！开车开得不好，还连试都不试！”

“你们不明白，”罪人解释说，“我没有开车。车子里还有一个人。”

这句声明所引起的震惊表现为一连声的“噢……啊……啊！”同时那辆小轿车的门也慢慢开了。人群——此刻已经是一大群了——不由得向后退，等到车门敞开以后，又有片刻阴森可怕的停顿。然后，逐渐逐渐地，一部分一部分地，一个脸色煞白、摇来晃去的人从撞坏了的汽车里跨了出来，先伸出一只大舞鞋在地面上试探了几下。

这位幽灵被汽车前灯的亮光照得睁不开眼，又被一片汽车喇叭声吵得糊里糊涂，站在那里摇晃了一会儿才认出那个穿风衣的人。

“怎么啦？”他镇静地问道，“咱们没汽油了吗？”

“你瞧！”

五六个人用手指指向那脱落下来的车轮——他朝它瞪了一眼，然后抬头向上看，仿佛他怀疑轮子是从天上掉下来的。

“轮子掉下来了，”有一个人解释说。

他点点头。

“起先我还没发现咱们停住了。”

过了一会儿，他深深吸了一口气，又挺起胸膛，用坚决的声音说：

“不知可不可以告诉我哪儿有加油站？”

至少有五六个人，其中有的比他稍微清醒一点，解释给他听，轮子和车子之间已经没有任何实质性的联系了。

“倒车，”过了一会儿他又出点子，“用倒车挡。”

“可是轮子掉啦！”

他迟疑了一会儿。

“试试也无妨嘛，”他说。

汽车喇叭的尖声怪叫达到了高潮，于是我掉转身，穿过草地回家。我回头望了一眼。一轮明月正照在盖茨比别墅的上面，使夜色跟先前一样美好；明月依旧，而欢

声笑语已经从仍然光辉灿烂的花园里消失了。一股突然的空虚此刻好像从那些窗户和巨大的门里流出来，使主人的形象处于完全的孤立之中，他这时站在阳台上，举起一只手作出正式的告别姿势。

重读一遍以上所写的，我觉得我已经给人一种印象，好像相隔好几个星期的三个晚上所发生的事情就是我所关注的一切。恰恰相反，它们只不过是一个繁忙的夏天当中的一些小事，而且直到很久以后，我对它们还远远不如对待我自己的私事那样关心。

大部分时间我都在工作。每天清早太阳把我的影子投向西边时，我沿着纽约南部摩天大楼之间的白色裂口匆匆走向正诚信托公司。我跟其他的办事员和年轻的债券推销员混得很熟，和他们一起在阴暗拥挤的饭馆里吃午饭，吃点小猪肉香肠加土豆泥，喝杯咖啡。我甚至和一个姑娘发生过短期的关系，她住在泽西城，在会计处工作。可是她哥哥开始给我眼色看，因此她七月里出去度假的时候，我就让这事悄悄地吹了。

我一般在耶鲁俱乐部吃晚饭——不知为了什么缘故这是我一天中最凄凉的事情——饭后我上楼到图书室去认真学习各种投资和证券一个钟头。同学会里往往有几个爱玩爱闹的人光临，但他们从来不进图书室，所以那里倒是个做工作的好地方。在那以后，如果天气宜人，我就沿着麦迪逊路溜达，经过那座古老的默里山饭店，再穿过三十三号街走到宾夕法尼亚车站。

我开始喜欢纽约了，喜欢夜晚那种奔放冒险的情调，喜欢那川流不息的男男女女和往来车辆给应接不暇的眼睛带来的满足。我喜欢在五号路上溜达，从人群中挑出风流的女人，幻想几分钟之内我就要进入她们的生活，而永远也不会有人知道或者非难这件事。有时，在我脑海里，我跟着她们走到神秘的街道拐角上她们所住的公

寓，到了门口她们回眸一笑，然后走进一扇门消失在温暖的黑暗之中。在大都市迷人的黄昏时刻，我有时感到一种难以排遣的寂寞，同时也觉得别人有同感——那些在橱窗面前踟蹰的穷困的青年小职员，等到了时候自个儿上小饭馆去吃一顿晚饭——黄昏中的青年小职员，虚度着夜晚和生活中最令人陶醉的时光。

有时晚上八点钟，四十几号街那一带阴暗的街巷挤满了出租汽车，五辆一排，热闹非凡，都是前往戏院区的，这时我心中就感到一种无名的怅惘。出租汽车在路口暂停的时候，车里边的人身子偎在一起，说话的声音传了出来，听不见的笑话引起了欢笑，点燃的香烟在里面造成一个个模糊的光圈。幻想着我也在匆匆赶去寻欢作乐，分享他们内心的激动，于是我暗自为他们祝福。

有好久我没有见过乔丹·贝克，后来在仲夏时节我又找到了她。起初我陪她到各处去感到很荣幸，因为她是个高尔夫球冠军，所有的人都知道她的大名。后来却有了另一种感情。我并没有真的爱上她，但我产生了一种温柔的好奇心。她对世人摆出的那副厌烦而高傲的面孔掩盖了点什么——大多数装模作样的言行到后来总是在掩盖点什么，虽然起初并不如此——有一天我发现了那是什么。当时我们两人一同到沃维克去参加一次别墅聚会。她把一辆借来的车子车篷不拉上就停在雨里，然后扯了个谎——突然之间我记起了那天晚上我在黛西家里想不起来的那件关于她的事。在她参加的第一个重要的高尔夫锦标赛上，发生了一场风波，差一点闹到登报，——有人说在半决赛那一局她把球从一个坏位置上移动过。事情几乎要成为一桩丑闻——后来平息了下去。一个球童收回了他的话，唯一的另一个见证人也承认他可能搞错了。这个事件和她的名字却留在我脑子里。

乔丹·贝克本能地回避聪明机警的男人，现在我明白了这是因为她认为，在对越轨的行动不以为然的社会圈子里活动比较保险。她不诚实到了不可救药的地步。她不能

忍受处于不利的地位，既然这样不甘心，因此我想她从很年轻的时候就开始耍各种花招，为了对世人保持那个傲慢的冷笑，而同时又能满足她那硬硬的、矫健的肉体的要求。

这对我完全无所谓。女人不诚实，这是人们司空见惯的事——我微微感到遗憾，过后就忘了。也是在参加那次别墅聚会的时候，我们俩有过一次关于开车的奇怪的谈话。因为她从几个工人身旁开过去，挨得太近，结果挡泥板擦着一个工人上衣的纽扣。

“你是个粗心的驾驶员，”我提出了抗议。“你该再小心点儿，要不就干脆别开车。”

“我很小心。”

“不对，你不小心。”

“不要紧，反正别人很小心，”她轻巧地说。

“这跟你开车有什么关系？”

“他们会躲开我的，”她固执地说，“要两方面才能造成一次车祸嘛。”

“假定你碰到一个像你一样不小心的人呢？”

“我希望永远不会碰到，”她答道，“我顶讨厌不小心的人。这也是我喜欢你的原因。”

她那双灰色的、被太阳照得眯紧的眼睛笔直地盯着前方，但她故意地改变了我们的关系，因而有片刻工夫我以为我爱上了她。但是我思想迟钝，而且满脑袋清规戒

律，这都对我的情欲起着刹车的作用，同时我也知道首先我得完全摆脱家乡的那段纠葛。我一直每星期写一封信并且签上：“爱你，尼克”，而我能想到的只是每次那位小姐一打网球，她的上唇上边总出现像小胡子一样的一溜汗珠。不过确实有过一种含糊的默契，这必须先委婉地解除，然后我才可以自由。

每个人都以为他自己至少有一种主要的美德，而这就是我的：我所认识的诚实的人并不多，而我自己恰好就是其中的一个。

第四章

星期天早晨，教堂的钟声响彻沿岸村镇的时候，时髦社会的男男女女又回到了盖茨比的别墅，在他的草坪上寻欢作乐。

“他是个私酒贩子，”那些少妇一边说，一边在他的鸡尾酒和他的好花之间的什么地方走动。“有一回他杀了一个人，那人打听出他是兴登堡的侄子，魔鬼的表兄弟。递给我一朵玫瑰花，宝贝，再往那只水晶杯子里给我倒最后一滴酒。”

有一次我在一张火车时刻表上空白的地方写下了那年夏天到盖茨比别墅来过的人的名字。现在这已经是一张很旧的时刻表了，沿着折印快要散了，上面印着“本表1922年7月5日起生效”。但我还认得出那些暗淡的名字，它们可以给你一个比我的笼统概括更清楚的印象，那些人到盖茨比家里做客，却对他一无所知，仿佛这是对他所表示的一种微妙的敬意。

好吧，从东卵来的有切斯特·贝克夫妇、利契夫妇、一个我在耶鲁认识的姓本森的，还有去年夏天在缅因州淹死的韦伯斯特·西维特大夫。还有霍恩比姆夫妇、威利·伏尔泰夫妇以及布莱克巴克全家，他们总是聚集在一个角落里，不管谁走近他们就像山

羊一样翘起鼻孔。还有伊士梅夫妇、克里斯蒂夫妇（更确切地说是休伯特·奥尔巴哈和克里斯蒂先生的老婆）和埃德加·比弗，据说有一个冬天的下午他的头发无缘无故地变得像雪一样白。

我记得，克拉伦斯·恩狄是从东卵来的。他只来过一次，穿着一条白灯笼裤，还在花园里跟一个姓艾蒂的二流子干了一架。从岛上更远的地方来的有齐德勒夫妇、O·R·P·斯雷德夫妇、乔治亚州的斯通瓦尔·杰克逊·亚伯拉姆夫妇，还有菲希加德夫妇和里普利·斯奈尔夫妇。斯奈尔在他去坐牢的前三天还来过，喝得烂醉躺在石子车道上，结果尤里西斯·斯威特太太的汽车从他的右手上开了过去。丹赛夫妇也来，还有年近七十的S·B·怀特贝特、莫理斯·A·弗林克、汉姆海德夫妇、烟草进口商贝路加以及贝路加的几个姑娘。

西卵来的有波尔夫妇、马尔雷德夫妇、塞西尔·罗伯克、塞西尔·肖恩、州议员古利克，还有卓越影片公司的后台老板牛顿·奥基德、艾克豪斯特和克莱德·科恩、小唐·S·施沃兹以及阿瑟·麦加蒂，他们都是跟电影界有这样那样的关系的。还有卡特利普夫妇、班姆堡夫妇和G·厄尔·马尔东，就是后来勒死妻子的那个姓马尔东的人的兄弟。投机商达·冯坦诺也来这儿，还有爱德·莱格罗、詹姆斯·B·（诨名是“坏酒”）菲来特、德·琼夫妇和欧内斯特·利里——他们都是来赌钱的，每当菲来特逛进花园里去，那就意味着他输得精光，第二天联合运输公司的股票又得有利可图地涨落一番。

有一个姓克利普斯普林格的男人在那儿次数又多时间又长，后来大家就称他为“房客”了——我怀疑他根本就没别家。在戏剧界人士中，有葛斯·威兹、霍勒斯·奥多诺万、莱斯特·迈尔、乔治·德克维德和弗朗西斯·布尔。从纽约城里来的还有克罗姆夫妇、贝克海森夫妇、丹尼克夫妇、罗素·贝蒂、科里根夫妇、凯利赫夫妇、杜厄夫妇、斯科里夫妇、S·W·贝尔丘夫妇、斯默克夫妇、现在离了婚的小奎因夫妇和亨利·L·

帕默多，他后来在时报广场跳在一列地下火车前面自杀了。

本尼·麦克莱纳亨总是带着四个姑娘一同来。她们每次人都不同，可是全长得一模一样，因此看上去都好像是以前来过的。她们的名字我忘了——杰奎林，大概是，要不然就是康雪爱拉，或者格洛丽亚或者珠迪或者琼，她们的姓要么是音调悦耳的花名和月份的名字，要么是美国大资本家的庄严的姓氏，只要有人追问，她们就会承认自己是他们的远亲。

除了这许多人之外，我还记得福丝娣娜·奥布莱恩至少来过一次，还有贝达克家姐妹，还有小布鲁尔，就是在战争中鼻子被枪弹打掉的那个，还有阿尔布鲁克斯堡先生和他的未婚妻海格小姐、阿迪泰·费兹彼得夫妇和一度当过美国退伍军人协会主席的P·朱厄特先生，还有克劳迪娅·希普小姐和一个被认为是她司机的男伴，还有一位某某亲王，我们管他叫公爵，即使我曾经知道他的名字，我也忘掉了。

所有这些人那年夏天都到盖茨比的别墅来过。七月末一天早上九点钟，盖茨比的华丽汽车沿着岩石车道一路颠到我门口停下，它那三个音符的喇叭发出一阵悦耳的音调。这是他第一次来看我，虽然我已经赴过两次他的晚会，乘过他的水上飞机，而且在他热情邀请之下时常借用他的海滩。

“早啊，老兄。你今天要和我一同吃午饭，我想我们就同车进城吧。”

他站在他车子的挡泥板上，保持着身体的平衡，那种灵活的动作是美国人所特有的——我想这是由于年轻时候不干重活的缘故，更重要的是由于我们各种紧张剧烈的运动造成姿势自然而优美。这个特点不断地以坐立不安的形式突破他那拘谨的举止而流露出来。他一刻也不安静；总是有一只脚在什么地方轻轻拍着，要不然就是有一只手在不耐烦地一开一合。

他瞧出我用赞赏的目光看着他的汽车。

“这车子很漂亮，是不是，老兄？”他跳了下来，好让我看清楚一些。“你以前从来没看到过它吗？”

我看到过，大家都看到过。车子是瑰丽的奶油色的，镀镍的地方闪光耀眼，车身长得出奇，四处鼓出帽子盒、大饭盒和工具箱，琳琅满目，还有层层叠叠的挡风玻璃反映出十来个太阳的光辉。我们在温室似的绿皮车厢里许多层玻璃后面坐下，向城里进发。

过去一个月里，我大概跟他交谈过五六次。使我失望的是，我发现他没有多少话可说。因此我最初以为他是一位相当重要的人物的印象，已经渐渐消失，他只不过是隔壁一家豪华的郊外饭店的老板。

接着就发生了那次使我感到窘迫的同车之行。我们还没到西卵镇，盖茨比就开始把他文雅的句子说到一半就打住，同时犹疑不决地用手拍着他酱色西装的膝盖。

“我说，老兄，”他出其不意地大声说，“你到底对我是怎么个看法？”

我有点不知所措，就开始说一些含糊其辞的话来搪塞。

“得啦，我来给你讲讲我自己的身世吧，”他打断了我的话。“你听到这么多闲话，我不希望你从中得到一个对我的错误看法。”

原来他知道那些给他客厅里的谈话增添风趣的离奇的流言蜚语。

“上帝作证，我要跟你说老实话。”他的右手突然命令上天的惩罚作好准备。“我是中西部一个有钱人家的儿子——家里人都死光了。我是在美国长大的，可是在牛

津受的教育，因为我家祖祖辈辈都是在牛津受教育的。这是个家庭传统。”

他斜着眼朝我望望——我这才明白为什么乔丹·贝克曾认为他撒谎。他把“在牛津受教育的”这句话匆匆带了过去，或者含糊其辞，或者半吞半吐，仿佛这句话以前就使他犯嘀咕。有了这个疑点，他的整个自述就站不住脚了，因此我猜疑他毕竟是有了一点什么不可告人之处。

“中西部什么地方？”我随便一问。

“旧金山。”

“哦，是这样。”

“我家里人都死光了，因此我继承了很多钱。”

他的声音很严肃，仿佛想起家族的突然消亡犹有余痛似的。有一会儿我怀疑他在捉弄我，但是看了他一眼就使我相信不是那么回事。

“后来我就像一个年轻的东方王公那样到欧洲各国首都去当寓公——巴黎、威尼斯、罗马——收藏珠宝，以红宝石为主；打打狮子老虎；画点儿画，不过是为了自己消遣，同时尽量想忘掉好久以前一件使我非常伤心的事。”

我好不容易才忍住不笑出来，因为他的话令人难以置信。他的措词本身那么陈腐，以致在我脑子里只能是这样的形象：一个裹着头巾的傀儡戏里的“角色”，在布龙公园追着打老虎，一面跑一面从身子里每个孔洞里往外漏木屑。

“后来就打仗了，老兄。这倒是莫大的宽慰，我千方百计地去找死，可是我的命好像有神仙保佑一样。战争开始的时候，我得到了中尉的军衔。在阿贡森林一役，我

带领我那个机枪营的残余部队一往直前，结果我们两边都有半英里的空地，步兵在那里无法推进。我们在那儿待了两天两夜，一百三十个人，十六挺刘易斯式机枪。后来等到步兵开上来，他们在堆积如山的尸体中发现了三个德国师的徽记。我被提升为少校，每一个同盟国政府都发给我一枚勋章——其中甚至包括门的内哥罗，亚德里亚海上的那个小小的门的内哥罗。”

小小的门的内哥罗！他仿佛把这几个字举了起来，冲着它们点头微笑。这一笑表示他了解门的内哥罗动乱的历史，并且同情门的内哥罗人民的英勇斗争。这一笑也表示他完全理解那个国家一系列的情况，正是这些情况使得门的内哥罗热情的小小的心里发出了这个颂扬。我的怀疑此刻已化为惊奇；这好像是匆匆忙忙翻阅十几本杂志一样。

他伸手到口袋里去掏，随即一块系在一条缎带上的金属片落进我的手掌心。

“这就是门的内哥罗的那一个。”

使我吃惊的是，这玩意看上去是真的。“丹尼罗勋章”，上面的一圈铭文写道：“门的内哥罗国王尼古拉斯。”

“翻过来。”

“杰伊·盖茨比少校，”我念道，“英勇过人。”

“这儿还有一件我随身带的东西，牛津时期的纪念品，是在三一学院校园里照的——我左边那个人现在是唐卡斯特伯爵。”

这是一张五六个年轻人的相片，身上穿着运动上衣，在一条拱廊下闲站着，背后可以看见许许多多塔尖，其中有盖茨比，比现在显得年轻点，但也年轻不了多少——

手里拿着一根板球棒。

这样看来他说的都是真的啦。我仿佛看见一张张五色斑斓的老虎皮挂在他在大运河上的宫殿里，我仿佛看见他打开一箱红宝石，借它们浓艳的红光来减轻他那颗破碎的心的痛苦。

“我今天有件大事要请你帮忙，”他说，一面很满意地把他的纪念品放进口袋里。“因此我觉得你应当了解我的情况。我不希望你认为我只是一个不三不四的人。要知道，我往往和陌生人交往，因为我东飘西荡，尽量想忘掉那件伤心事。”他犹疑了一下。“这件事今天下午你就可以听到。”

“吃午饭的时候？”

“不，今天下午。我碰巧打听到你约了贝克小姐喝茶。”

“你是说你爱上了贝克小姐吗？”

“不是，老兄，我没有。可是承蒙贝克小姐答应我跟你谈这件事。”

我一点儿也不知道“这件事”是指什么，但是我兴趣不大，倒觉得厌烦。我请贝克小姐喝茶，并不是为了谈论杰伊·盖茨比先生。我敢肯定他要求的一定是什么异想天开的事，有一会儿工夫我真后悔当初不该踏上他那客人过多的草坪。

他一句话也不说了。我们离城越近他也越发矜持。我们经过罗斯福港，瞥见船身有一圈红漆的远洋轮船，又沿着一条贫民区的石子路急驰而过，路两旁排列着二十世纪初褪色的镀金时代的那些还有人光顾的阴暗酒吧。接着，灰烬之谷在我们两边伸展出去，我从车上瞥见威尔逊太太浑身是劲在加油机旁喘着气替人加油。

汽车的挡泥板像翅膀一样张开。我们一路给半个阿斯托里亚带来了光明——只是半个，因为正当我们在高架铁路的支柱中间绕来绕去的时候，我听到了一辆机器脚踏车熟悉的“嘟——嘟——劈啪”的响声，随即看到一名气急败坏的警察在我们车旁行驶。

“好了，老兄，”盖茨比喊道。我们放慢了速度。盖茨比从他的皮夹里掏出一张白色卡片，在警察的眼前晃了一下。

“行了，您哪，”警察满口应承，并且轻轻碰一碰帽檐。“下次就认识您啦，盖茨比先生。请原谅我！”

“那是什么？”我问道，“那张牛津的相片吗？”

“我给警察局长帮过一次忙，因此他每年都给我寄一张圣诞贺片。”

在大桥上，阳光从钢架中间透过来在川流不息的车辆上闪闪发光，河对岸城里的大楼高耸在眼前，像一堆一堆白糖块一样，尽是出于好心花了没有铜臭的钱盖起来的。从皇后区大桥看去，这座城市永远好像是初次看见一样，那样引人入胜，充满了世界上所有的神秘和瑰丽。

一辆装着死人的灵车从我们身旁经过，车上堆满了鲜花，后面跟着两辆马车，遮帘拉上了的，还有几辆比较轻松的马车载着亲友。这些亲友从车子里向我们张望，从他们忧伤的眼睛和短短的上唇看上去他们是东南欧那带的人。我很高兴在他们凄惨的出丧车队中还能看到盖茨比豪华的汽车。我们的车子从桥上过布莱克威尔岛的时候，一辆大型轿车超越了我们的车子，司机是个白人，车子里坐着三个时髦的黑人，两男一女。他们冲着我们翻翻白眼，一副傲慢争先的神气，我看了忍不住放声大笑。

“我们现在一过这座桥，什么事都可能发生了，”我心里想，“无论什么事都会有.....”

因此，连盖茨比这种人物也是会出现的，这用不着大惊小怪。炎热的中午。在四十二号街一家电扇大开的地下餐厅里，我跟盖茨比碰头一起吃午饭。我先眨眨眼驱散外面马路上的亮光，然后才在休息室里模模糊糊认出了他，他正在跟一个人说话。

“卡罗威先生，这是我的朋友沃尔夫山姆先生。”

一个矮小的塌鼻子的犹太人抬起了他的大脑袋来打量我，他的鼻孔里面长着两撮很浓的毛。过了一会儿我才在半明半暗的光线中发现了他的两只小眼睛。

“.....于是我瞥了他一眼，”沃尔夫山姆先生一面说下去一面很热切地和我握手。“然后，你猜猜我干了什么事？”

“什么事？”我有礼貌地问道。

显然他并不是在跟我讲话，因为他放下了我的手，把他那只富有表情的鼻子对准了盖茨比。

“我把那笔钱交给凯兹保，同时我对他说：‘就这样吧，凯兹保，他要是不住嘴，一分钱也不要给他。’他当时立刻就住了嘴。”

盖茨比拉住我们每人一只胳膊，向前走进餐厅，于是沃尔夫山姆先生把他刚开始说的一句话咽了下去，露出了如梦似痴的神态。

“要姜汁威士忌吗？”服务员领班问道。

“这儿的这家馆子不错，”沃尔夫山姆先生抬头望着天花板上的长老会美女

说，“但是我更喜欢马路对面那家。”

“好的，来几杯姜汁威士忌，”盖茨比同意，然后对沃尔夫山姆先生说，“那边太热了。”

“又热又小——不错，”沃尔夫山姆先生说，“可是充满了回忆。”

“那是哪一家馆子？”我问。

“老大都会。”

“老大都会，”沃尔夫山姆先生闷闷不乐地回忆道，“那里聚集过多少早已消逝的面容，聚集过多少如今已经不在人间的朋友。我只要活着就不会忘记他们开枪打死罗西·罗森塔尔的那个晚上。我们一桌六个人，罗西一夜大吃大喝。快到天亮的时候，服务员一副尴尬面孔来到他跟前说有个人请他到外面去讲话。‘好吧，’罗西说，马上就要站起来，我把他一把拉回到椅子上。”

“‘那些杂种要找你，让他们进来好了，罗西，但你可千万千万不要离开这间屋子。’那时候已经是清早四点，要是我们掀起窗帘，我们会看见天已经亮了。”

“他去了吗？”我天真地问。

“他当然去了。”沃尔夫山姆先生的鼻子气呼呼地向我一掀。“他走到门口还回过头来说：‘别让那个服务员把我的咖啡收掉！’说完他就走到外面人行道上，他们向他吃得饱饱的肚皮放了三枪，然后开车跑掉。”

“其中四个人坐了电椅，”我想了起来就说道。

“五个，连贝克在内。”他鼻孔转向我，带着对我感兴趣的神情。“我听说你在找

一个做生意的关系。”

这两句话连在一起使人听了震惊。盖茨比替我回答：

“啊，不是，”他大声说，“这不是那个人。”

“不是吗？”沃尔夫山姆先生似乎很失望。

“这只是一位朋友。我告诉过你我我们改天再谈那件事嘛。”

“对不起，”沃尔夫山姆先生说，“我弄错了人。”

一盘鲜美的肉丁烤菜端了上来，于是沃尔夫山姆先生就忘掉了老大都会的温情得多的气氛，开始斯斯文文地大吃起来。同时他的两眼很慢地转动着，把整个餐厅巡视一遍；他又转过身来打量紧坐在我们背后的客人，从而完成了整个弧圈。我想，要不是有我在座，他准会连我们自己桌子底下也去瞧一眼的。

“我说，老兄，”盖茨比伸过头来跟我说，“今天早上在车子里我恐怕惹你生气了吧？”

他脸上又出现了那种笑容，可是这次我无动于衷。

“我不喜欢神秘的玩意儿，”我答道，“我也不明白你为什么不肯坦率地讲出来，让我知道你要什么。为什么一定全要通过贝克小姐？”

“噢，绝不是什么鬼鬼祟祟的事情，”他向我保证。“你也知道，贝克小姐是一位大运动家，她决不会做什么不正当的事。”

忽然间他看了看表，跳了起来，匆匆离开餐厅，把我跟沃尔夫山姆先生留在桌子

边。

“他得去打电话，” 沃尔夫山姆先生说，一面目送他出去。“好人，是不是？一表人才，而且人品极好。”

“是的。”

“他是牛劲出身的。”

“哦！”

“他上过英国的牛劲大学。你知道牛劲大学吗？”

“我听说过。”

“它是全世界最有名的大学之一。”

“你认识盖茨比很久了吗？” 我问道。

“好几年了，” 他心满意足地答道。“刚打完仗之后我偶然有机会认识了他。可是我跟他才谈了一个钟头就知道我发现了一个非常有教养的人。我就对自己说：‘这就是你愿意带回家介绍你母亲和妹妹认识的那种人。’ ” 他停了下来。“我知道你在看我的袖扣。”

我本来并没有看，可是现在倒看了。它们是用几片小象牙制作的，看着眼熟得奇怪。

“用精选的真人臼齿做的。” 他告诉我。

“真的！” 我仔细看看。“这倒是个很妙的主意。”

“不错。”他把衬衣袖口缩回到上衣下面去。“不错，盖茨比在女人方面非常规矩。朋友的太太他连看也不看。”

这个受到本能的信赖的对象又回到桌边坐下的时候，沃尔夫山姆先生一口把他的咖啡喝掉，然后站起身来。

“我中饭吃得很高兴，”他说，“现在我要扔下你们两个年轻人走了，免得你们嫌我不知趣。”

“别忙，迈尔，”盖茨比说，一点也不热情。沃尔夫山姆先生像祝福似的举起了手。

“你们很有礼貌，不过我是老一辈的人了，”他严肃地说。“你们在这里坐坐，谈谈体育，谈谈你们的年轻女人，谈谈你们的……”他又把手一挥，以代替一个幻想的名词。“至于我哩，我已经五十岁了，我也就不再打搅你们了。”

他跟我们握握手，掉转身去，他那忧伤的鼻子又在颤动。我不知是否我说了什么话得罪了他。

“他有时会变得很伤感，”盖茨比解释道。“今天又是他伤感的日子。他在纽约是个人物——百老汇的地头蛇。”

“他到底是什么人？是演员吗？”

“不是。”

“牙科医生？”

“迈尔·沃尔夫山姆？不是，他是个赌棍。”盖茨比犹疑了一下，然后若无其事地补

充道，“他就是一九一九年那年非法操纵世界棒球联赛的那个人。”

“非法操纵世界棒球联赛？”我重复了一遍。

居然有这种事，我听了发愣。我当然记得世界棒球联赛在一九一九年被人非法操纵，可是即使我想到过这种事，我也会以为那只不过是一件发生了的事情，是一连串必然事件的后果。我从来没料到一个人可以愚弄五千万人，就像一个撬开保险箱的贼那样专心致志。

“他怎么会干那个的？”我过了一分钟才问道。

“他只不过是看中了机会。”

“他怎么没坐牢呢？”

“他们逮不住他，老兄。他是个非常精明的人。”

我抢着付了账。服务员把找的钱送来时，我看到了汤姆·布坎农在拥挤的餐厅的那一边。

“跟我来一下，”我说，“我得同一个人打个招呼。”

汤姆一看见我们就跳了起来，朝我们的方向迈了五六步。

“你这一阵哪儿去了？”他急切地问道，“黛西气死了，因为你不打电话来。”

“这位是盖茨比先生，布坎农先生。”

他们随便握了握手，盖茨比脸上忽然流露出一种不自然的、不常见的窘迫表情。

“你近来到底怎么样？”汤姆问我。“你怎么会跑这么远到这儿来吃饭？”

“我是和盖茨比先生在一道吃午饭。”

我转身去看盖茨比先生，但他已经不在那儿了。

一九一七年十月里有一天——

（那天下午乔丹·贝克说，当时她挺直地坐在广场饭店茶室里一张挺直的椅子上。）

——我正在从一个地方走向另一个地方走去，一半走在人行道上，一半走在草坪上。我更喜欢走草坪，因为我穿了一双英国鞋，鞋底有会在软绵绵的地面留下印痕的橡皮疙瘩。我还穿了一条新的能随风微微扬起的方格呢裙子，每当裙子随风扬起来，所有人家门前的红、白、蓝三色旗就都挺得笔直，并且发出“啧啧——啧啧——啧啧——”的声音，好像很不以为然似的。

几面最大的旗子和几片最大的草坪都是属于黛西·费伊家的。她刚刚十八岁，比我大两岁，是路易斯维尔所有小姐中最出风头的一个。她穿的是白衣服，开的是一辆白色小跑车，她家电话一天到晚响个不停，泰勒营那些兴奋的青年军官一个个都要求那天晚上独占她的全部时间。“至少，给一个钟头吧！”

那天早上我从她家门口对面路过时，她的白色跑车停在路边，她跟一位我以前从未见过的中尉同坐在车上。他们俩彼此全神贯注，一直到我走到五步之内她才看见我。

“哈啰，乔丹，”她出其不意地喊道。“请你过来。”

她要跟我说话，我觉得很光彩，因为在所有年纪比我大的女孩当中，我最崇拜的就

是她。她问我是否到红十字会去做绷带。我说是的。那么，可否请我告诉他们这这天她不能来了？黛西说话的时候，那位军官盯住她看，每一个姑娘都巴望人家有时会用这种神态来看自己。因为我觉得那非常浪漫，所以我后来一直记得这个情节。他的名字叫杰伊·盖茨比，从那以后一隔四年多，我一直没再见过他——就连我在长岛遇到他以后，我也不知道原来就是同一个人。

那是一九一七年。到了第二年，我自己也有了几个男朋友，同时我开始参加比赛，因此我就不常见到黛西。她来往的是一帮比我年纪稍大一点的朋友——如果她还跟任何人来往的话。关于她的荒唐谣言到处传播——说什么有一个冬天夜晚她母亲发现她在收拾行装，准备到纽约去跟一个正要到海外去的军人告别。家里人有效地阻止了她，可是事后她有好几个星期不跟家里人讲话。从那以后她就不再跟军人一起玩了，只跟城里几个根本不能参军的平脚近视的青年人来往。

等到第二年秋天，她又活跃起来，和以前一样活跃。停战以后她参加了一次初进社交界的舞会，据说二月里她跟新奥尔良市来的一个人订了婚。六月里她就跟芝加哥的汤姆·布坎农结了婚，婚礼之隆重豪华是路易斯维尔前所未闻的。他和一百位客人乘了四节包车一同南来，在莫尔巴赫饭店租了整个一层楼，在婚礼的前一天他送了她一串估计值三十五万美元的珍珠。

我是伴娘之一。在举行婚礼前夕送别新娘的宴会之前半个小时，我走进她的屋子，发现她躺在床上，穿着绣花的衣裳，像那个六月的夜晚一样的美，像猴子一样喝得烂醉。她一手拿着一瓶白葡萄酒，一手捏着一封信。

“恭……喜我，”她含混不清地咕哝着说，“从来没喝过酒，啊，今天喝得可真痛快。”

“怎么回事，黛西？”

我吓坏了，真的；我从来没见过一个女孩子醉成这副模样。

“喏，心肝宝贝。”她在拿到床上的字纸篓里乱摸了一会，掏出了那串珍珠。“把这个拿下楼去，是谁的东西就还给谁。告诉大家，黛西改变主意了。就说‘黛西改变主意了！’”

她哭了起来——她哭了又哭。我跑出去，找到她母亲的贴身女用人，然后我们锁上了门，让她洗个冷水澡。她死死捏住那封信不放。她把信带到澡盆里去，捏成湿淋淋的一团，直到她看见它碎得像雪花一样，才让我拿过去放在肥皂碟里。

可是她一句话也没有再说。我们让她闻阿摩尼亚精，把冰放在她脑门上，然后又替她把衣裳穿好。半小时后我们走出房间，那串珍珠套在她脖子上，这场风波就过去了。第二天下午五点钟，她没事儿似的跟汤姆·布坎农结了婚，然后动身到南太平洋去作三个月的旅行。

他们回来以后，我在圣巴巴拉见到了他们，我觉得我从来没见过一个女孩那么迷恋丈夫的。如果他离开屋子一会儿工夫，她就会惴惴不安地四下张望，嘴里说：“汤姆上哪儿去啦？”同时脸上显出一副神情恍惚的样子，直到她看见他从门口走进来。她往往坐在沙滩上，一坐个把钟头，让他把头搁在她膝盖上，一面用手指轻轻按摩他的眼睛，一面无限欣喜地看着他。看着他们俩在一起那种情景真使你感动——使你入迷，使你莞尔而笑。那是八月里的事。我离开圣巴巴拉一个星期以后，汤姆一天夜晚在凡图拉公路上与一辆货车相撞，把他车上的前轮撞掉了一只。跟他同车的姑娘也上了报，因为她的胳膊撞断了——她是圣巴巴拉饭店里的一个收拾房间的女用人。

第二年四月黛西生了她那个小女儿，随后他们到法国去待了一年。有一个春天我在戛纳见到他们，后来又在多维尔见过，再后来他们就回芝加哥定居了。黛西在芝加哥很出风头，这是你知道的。他们和一帮花天酒地的人来往，个个都是又年轻又有钱又放荡的，但是她的名声却始终清清白白。也许因为她不喝酒的缘故。在爱喝酒的人中间而自己不喝酒，那是很占便宜的。你可以守口如瓶，而且，你可以为你自己的小动作选择时机，等到别人都喝得烂醉要么看不见要么不理会的时候再搞。也许黛西从来不爱搞什么桃色事件——然而她那声音里却有点儿什么异样的地方……

后来，大约六个星期以前，她多年来第一次听到了盖茨比这个名字。就是那次我问你——你还记得吗？——你认识不认识西卵的盖茨比。你回家之后，她到我屋里来把我推醒，问我：“哪个姓盖茨比的？”我把他形容了一番——我半睡半醒——她用最古怪的声音说那一定是她过去认识的那个人。直到那时我才把这个盖茨比跟当年坐在她白色跑车里的那个军官联系起来。

等到乔丹·贝克把上面这些都讲完，我们离开了广场饭店已经有半个钟头，两人乘着一辆敞篷马车穿过中央公园。太阳已经落在西城五十几号街那一带电影明星们居住的公寓大楼后面，这时儿童像草地上的蟋蟀一样聚在一起，他们清脆的声音在闷热的黄昏中歌唱：

我是阿拉伯的酋长，

你的爱情在我心上。

今夜当你睡意正浓，

我将爬进你的帐篷——

“真是奇怪的巧合，”我说。

“但这根本不是什么巧合。”

“为什么不是？”

“盖茨比买下那座房子，就是因为这样一来黛西就在海湾对面嘛。”

这么说来，六月里那个夜晚他所向往的不单单是天上的星斗了。盖茨比在我眼中有了生命，忽然之间从他那子宫般的毫无目的的豪华里分娩了出来。

“他想知道，”乔丹继续说，“你肯不肯哪一天下午请黛西到你住处来，然后让他过来坐一坐。”

这个要求如此微不足道，真使我震惊。他居然等了五年，又买了一座大厦，在那里把星光施与来来往往的飞蛾——为的是在哪个下午他可以到一个陌生人的花园里“坐一坐”。

“我非得先知道这一切，然后他才能托我这点小事吗？”

“他害怕，他等得太久了。他想你也许会见怪。尽管如此，他其实是非常顽强的。”

我还是放不下心。

“他为什么不请你安排一次见面呢？”

“他要让她看看他的房子，”她解释道。“你的房子又刚好在紧隔壁。”

“哦！”

“我想他大概指望哪天晚上她会翩然而至，光临他的一次宴会，”乔丹继续说，“但是她始终没有来过。后来他就开始有意无意地问人家是否认识她，而我是他找到的第一个人。就是在舞会上他派人去请我的那一晚，可惜你没听到他那样煞费苦心、转弯抹角才说到正题。我自然马上建议在纽约吃一顿午餐——不料他急得像要发疯：‘我可不要做什么不对头的事情！’他一再说，‘我只要在隔壁见见她。’”

“后来我说你是汤姆的好朋友，他又想完全打消这个主意。他对汤姆的情况不太了解，虽然他说他有好几年天天看一份芝加哥报纸，希望碰巧可以看到黛西的名字。”

这时天黑了，我们的马车走到一座小桥下面，我伸出胳膊搂住乔丹的金黄色肩膀，把她拉到我身边，请她一起吃晚饭。忽然之间，我想的已经不是黛西和盖茨比，而是这个干净、结实、智力有限的人，她对世间的一切都抱怀疑态度，她怪精神地往后靠在我伸出的胳膊上。一个警句开始在我耳中令人兴奋地激动鸣响：“世界上只有被追求者和追求者，忙碌的人和疲倦的人。”

“黛西生活里也应当有点安慰，”乔丹喃喃地对我说。

“她愿意见盖茨比吗？”

“事先是不让她知道的。盖茨比不要她知道。你只是请她来喝茶。”

我们经过了一排黑黝黝的树，然后五十九号街的高楼里一片柔和的灯光照到下面公园里来。跟盖茨比和汤姆·布坎农不一样，我的眼前没有什么情人的面影沿着阴暗的檐口和耀眼的招牌缥缈浮动，于是我把身边这个女孩子拉得更近一点，同时胳膊搂得更紧。她那张苍白、轻藐的嘴嫣然一笑，于是我把她拉得更近一点，这次一直拉

到贴着我的脸。

第五章

那天夜里我回到西卵的时候，有一会儿我疑心是我的房子着了火。半夜两点钟了，而半岛的那整个一角照得亮堂堂的，光线照在灌木丛上好像是假的，又照在路旁电线上映出细细的一长条一长条的闪光。转弯以后，我才看出原来是盖茨比的别墅，从塔楼到地窖都灯火通明。

起初我还以为又是一次晚会，一次狂欢的盛会，整个别墅统统敞开，好让大家做游戏，玩捉迷藏或“罐头沙丁鱼”。可是一点声音都没有。只有树丛中的风声，风把电线吹动，电灯忽暗忽明，好像房子在对着黑夜眨眼。当出租汽车哼哼着开走的时候，我看到盖茨比穿过他的草坪朝着我走过来。

“你府上看上去像世界博览会一样，”我说。

“是吗？”他心不在焉地转过眼睛去望望。“我刚才打开了几间屋子随便看看。咱俩到康尼岛去玩吧，老兄。坐我车子去。”

“时间太晚了。”

“那么，到游泳池里泡一泡怎么样？我一夏天还没泡过哩。”

“我得上床睡觉了。”

“好吧。”

他等待着，急巴巴地望着我。

“我和贝克小姐谈过了，”我等了一会才说，“我明天打电话给黛西，请她到这里来喝茶。”

“哦，那好嘛，”他漫不经心地说，“我不希望给您添麻烦。”

“哪天对您合适？”

“哪天对您合适？”他马上纠正了我的话。“我不希望给您添麻烦，你明白。”

他考虑了一会。然后，他勉强地说：“我要让人把草地平整一下。”

我们俩都低头看了看草地——在我的乱蓬蓬的草地和他那一大片剪得整整齐齐的深绿色草坪之间有一条很清楚的分界线。我猜他指的是我的草地。

“另外还有一件小事，”他含混地说，然后犹疑了一会。

“你是不是希望推迟几天？”我问道。

“哦，跟那个没关系。至少……”他笨拙地一连开了几个头，“呃，我猜想……呃，我说，老兄，你挣钱不多，是吧？”

“不太多。”

这似乎使他放心一点，于是他更有信心地继续说了下去。

“我猜想你挣钱不多，如果你不怪我——你知道，我附带做点小生意，搞点副业，你明白。我也想到既然你挣钱不多——你在卖债券，是吧，老兄？”

“学着干。”

“那么，这也许会引起你的兴趣。不需要花费很多时间，你就可以挣一笔可观的钱。碰巧是一件相当机密的事。”

我现在认识到，如果当时情况不同，那次谈话可能会是我一生中的一个转折点。但是，因为这个建议说得很露骨，很不得体，明摆着是为了酬谢我给他帮的忙，我别无选择，只有当场把他的话说断。

“我手头工作很忙，”我说。“我非常感激，可是我不可能再承担更多的工作。”

“你不需要跟沃尔夫山姆打任何交道的。”显然他以为我讨厌中饭时候提到的那种“关系”，但我告诉他他搞错了。他又等了一会，希望我找个话题，但是我心完全不在这儿，没有答碴，结果他只好勉强地回家去了。

这一晚使我感到又轻飘又快乐；大概我一走进自己的大门就倒头大睡。因此我不知道盖茨比究竟有没有去康尼岛，也不知他又花了几个小时“随便看看房间”，同时他的房子继续刺眼地大放光明。第二天早晨我从办公室给黛西打了个电话，请她过来喝茶。

“别带汤姆来，”我警告她。

“什么？”

“别带汤姆来。”

“谁是‘汤姆’？”她装傻地问道。

我们约定的那天大雨倾盆。上午十一点钟，一个男的身穿雨衣，拖着一架刈草机，敲敲我的大门，说盖茨比先生派他过来刈我的草。这使我想起我忘了叫我那芬兰女

用人回来，于是我就开车到西卵镇上去，在湿淋淋的、两边是白石灰墙的小巷子里找她，同时买了一些茶杯、柠檬和鲜花。

花是多余的，因为下午两点钟从盖茨比家里送来一暖房的鲜花，连同无数插花的器皿。一小时以后，大门战战兢兢地打开，盖茨比一身白法兰绒西装，银色衬衫，金色领带，慌慌张张跑了进来。他脸色煞白，眼圈黑黑的，看得出他一夜没睡好。

“一切都准备好了吗？”他一进门就问。

“草地看上去很漂亮，如果你指的是草地。”

“什么草地？”他茫然地问道，“哦，你院子里的草地。”他从窗子里向外看，可是从他的表情看来，我相信他什么都没看见。

“看上去很好，”他含糊地说。“有一家报纸说他们认为雨在四点左右会停，大概是《纽约日报》。喝茶所需要的东西都齐全了吗？”

我把他带到食品间里去，他有点看不顺眼似地向那芬兰女用人望望。我们一起把甜食店里买来的十二块柠檬蛋糕细细打量了一番。

“这行吗？”我问道。

“当然行，当然行！好得很！”然后他又茫然地加了一声，“……老兄。”

三点半钟左右雨渐渐收了，变成了湿雾，不时还有几滴雨水像露珠一样在雾里飘着。盖茨比心不在焉地翻阅着一本克莱的《经济学》，每当芬兰女用人的脚步震动厨房的地板他就一惊，并且不时朝着模糊的窗户张望，仿佛一系列看不见然而怵目惊心的事件正在外面发生。最后他站了起来，用犹疑的声音对我说，他要回家了。

“那是为什么？”

“没有人来喝茶啦。时间太晚了！”他看了看他的表，仿佛别处还有紧急的事等着他去办。“我不能等一整天。”

“别傻，现在刚刚是四点差两分。”

他苦恼地坐了下来，仿佛我推了他似的，正当这时传来一辆汽车拐进我巷子的声音。我们俩都跳了起来，然后我自己也有点慌张地跑到院子里去。

在滴着水的没有花的紫丁香树下，一辆大型的敞篷汽车沿着汽车道开了上来。车子停了。黛西的脸在一顶三角形的浅紫色帽子下面歪向一边，满面春风、心花怒放地朝我看着。

“你千真万确是住在这儿吗，我最亲爱的人儿？”

她那悠扬的嗓音在雨中听了使人陶醉。我得先倾听那高低起伏的声音，过了一会儿才听出她所说的话语。一缕潮湿的头发贴在她面颊上，像抹了一笔蓝色的颜料一样；我搀她下车的时候，看到她的手也被晶莹的水珠打湿了。

“你是爱上我了吗，”她悄悄在我耳朵边说，“要不然为什么我非得一个人来呢？”

“那是雷克兰特古堡的秘密。叫你的司机走得远远的，过一个钟头再来。”

“过一个钟头再回来，弗迪。”然后煞有介事地低声说，“他名字叫弗迪。”

“汽油味道影响他的鼻子吗？”

“我想并不影响，”她天真地说，“为什么？”

我们走进屋子里。使我大为惊异的是起居室里空荡荡的。

“噢，这真滑稽，”我大声说。

“什么滑稽？”

正在此刻大门上有人斯文地轻轻敲了一声，她转过头去看。我走到外面去开门。盖茨比面如死灰，那只手像重东西一样揣在上衣口袋里，两只脚站在一摊水里，神色凄惶地瞪着我的眼睛。

他阔步从我身边跨进门廊，手还揣在上衣口袋里，仿佛受牵线操纵似的突然一转身，走进起居室不见了。那样子一点也不滑稽。我意识到自己的心也在扑通扑通跳。外面雨下大了，我伸手把大门关上。

有半分钟之久，一点声音也没有。然后我听到从起居室里传来一阵哽咽似的低语声和一点笑声，跟着就是黛西的嘹亮而做作的声音：

“又见到你，我真高兴极了。”

一阵静寂；时间长得可怕。我在门廊里没事可做，于是我走进了屋子里。

盖茨比两手仍然揣在口袋里，正斜倚在壁炉架上，勉强装出一副悠然自得、甚至无精打采的神气。他的头往后仰，一直碰到一架早已报废的大台钟的钟面上；他那双显得心神错乱的眼睛从这个位置向下盯着黛西，她坐在一张硬背椅子的边上，神色惶恐，姿态倒很优美。

“我们以前见过，”盖茨比咕哝着说。他瞥了我一眼，嘴唇张开想笑又没笑出来。

那架钟由于他的头的压力就在这一刻摇摇欲坠，幸好他连忙转过身来用颤抖的手指把钟抓住，放回原处。然后他坐了下来，直挺挺地，胳膊肘放在沙发扶手上，手托住下巴。

“对不起，把钟碰了，”他说。

我自己的脸也涨得通红，像被热带的太阳晒过那样。我脑子里虽有千百句客套话，可是一句也说不出。

“是一架很旧的钟，”我呆头呆脑地告诉他们。

我想我们大家当时有一会儿都相信那架钟已经在地板上砸得粉碎了。

“我们多年不见了，”黛西说，她的声音尽可能地平板。

“到十一月整整五年。”

盖茨比脱口而出的回答至少使我们大家又愣了一分钟。我急中生智，建议他们帮我到厨房里去预备茶，他们俩立刻站了起来，正在这时那魔鬼般的芬兰女用人用托盘把茶端了进来。

递茶杯、传蛋糕所造成的忙乱大受欢迎，在忙乱之中建立了一种有形的体统。盖茨比躲到了一边去，当我跟黛西交谈时，他用紧张而痛苦的眼睛认真地在两人之间看来看去。可是，因为平静本身并不是目的，我一有机会就找了个借口，站起身来要走。

“你上哪儿去？”盖茨比马上惊慌地问道。

“我就回来。”

“你走以前，我有话要跟你说。”

他发疯似地跟我走进厨房，关上了门，然后很痛苦地低声说：“啊，天哪！”

“怎么啦？”

“这是个大错，”他把头摇来摇去地说，“大错而特错。”

“你不过是难为情罢了，没别的。”幸好我又补了一句，“黛西也难为情。”

“她难为情？”他大不以为然地重复了我的话。

“跟你同样难为情。”

“声音不要那么大。”

“你的行动像一个小孩，”我不耐烦地发作说，“不但如此，你也很没礼貌。黛西孤零零一个人坐在那里面。”

他举起手来不让我再讲下去，怀着令人难忘的怨气看了我一眼，然后战战兢兢地打开了门，又回到那间屋子里去。

我从后门走了出去，——半小时前盖茨比也是从这里出去，精神紧张地绕着房子跑了一圈——奔向一棵黑黝黝的盘缠多节的大树，茂密的树叶构成了一块挡雨的苫布。此刻雨又下大了，我那片不成形的草地，虽然被盖茨比的园丁修剪得很整齐，现在却满是小泥潭和历史悠久的沼泽了。从树底下望出去，除了盖茨比的庞大的房屋之外没有别的东西可看，于是我盯着它看了半个小时，好像康德盯着他的教堂尖塔一样。这座房子是十年前一位酿酒商在那个“仿古热”初期建造的，并且还有一个传闻，说他曾答应为所有邻近的小型别墅付五年的税款，只要各位房主肯在屋顶

铺上茅草。也许他们的拒绝使他“创建家业”的计划受到了致命的打击——他立刻衰颓了。丧事的花圈还挂在门上，他的子女就把房子卖掉了。美国人虽然愿意、甚至渴望去当农奴，可是一向是坚决不肯当乡下佬的。

半小时以后，太阳又出来了，食品店的送货汽车沿着盖茨比的汽车道拐弯，送来他的仆人做晚饭用的原料——我敢肯定他本人一口也吃不下。一个女用人开始打开楼上的窗户，在每个窗口出现片刻，然后，从正中的大窗户探出身子，若有所思地向花园里啐了一口。该是我回去的时候了。刚才雨下个不停，仿佛是他们俩窃窃私语的声音，不时随着感情的迸发而变得高昂。但是在这新的静寂中，我觉得房子里面也是一片肃静了。

我走了进去——先在厨房里作出一切可能的响声，就差把炉灶推翻——但我相信他们什么也没听见。他们两人分坐在长沙发两端，面面相觑，仿佛有什么问题提了出来，或者悬而未决，一切难为情的迹象也都消失了。黛西满面泪痕，我一进来她就跳了起来，用手绢对着一面镜子擦起脸来。但是盖茨比身上却发生了一种令人惶惑的变化。他简直是光芒四射；虽然没有任何表示欣喜的言语姿势，一种新的幸福感从他身上散发出来，充塞了那间小屋子。

“哦，哈啰，老兄，”他说，仿佛他有好多年没见过我了。有一会儿工夫我还以为他想跟我握手哩。

“雨停了。”

“是吗？”等他明白我说的是什么，又发觉屋子里阳光闪烁时，他像一个气象预报员又像一个欣喜若狂的回归光守护神似的露出了笑容，又把消息转报给黛西。“你看多有趣，雨停了。”

“我很高兴，杰伊。” 她的声音哀艳动人，可是她吐露的只是她意外的喜悦。

“我要你和黛西一起到我家里来，” 他说，“我很想领她参观参观。”

“你真的要我来吗？”

“绝对如此，老兄。”

黛西上楼去洗脸——我很羞惭地想起了我的毛巾，可惜为时太晚了——盖茨比和我在草坪上等候。

“我的房子很好看，是不是？” 他问道。“你瞧它整个正面映射着阳光。”

我同意说房子真漂亮极了。

“是的。” 他用眼睛仔细打量了一番，每一扇拱门、每一座方塔都看到了。“我只花了三年工夫就挣到了买房子的钱。”

“我还以为你的钱是继承来的。”

“不错，老兄，” 他脱口而出说，“但是我在大恐慌期间损失了一大半——就是战争引起的那次大恐慌。”

我猜想他自己也不大知道他在说些什么，因为等我问他做的是什生意时，他回答：“那是我的事儿。” 话说出口他才发觉这个回答很不得体。

“哦，我干过好几行，” 他改口说，“我做药材生意，后来又做过石油生意。可是现在我这两行都不干了。” 他比较注意地看着我。“那么说你考虑过那天晚上我提的那件事了？”

我还没来得及回答，黛西就从房子里出来了，她衣服上的两排铜钮扣在阳光中闪烁。

“是那边那座老大的房子？”她用手指着大声问。

“你喜欢它吗？”

“我太喜欢了，但是我不明白你怎么能一个人住在那儿。”

“我让它不分昼夜都挤满了有意思的人，干有意思的事情的人，有名气的人。”

我们没有抄近路沿海边过去，而是绕到大路上，从巨大的后门进去的。黛西望着那衬在天空的中世纪城堡的黑黝黝的轮廓，用她那迷人的低语赞不绝口，一边走一边又赞赏花园，赞赏长寿花闪烁的香味，山楂花和梅花泡沫般的香味，还有吻别花淡金色的香味。走到大理石台阶前，我看不到鲜艳的时装在门口出出进进，除了树上的鸟鸣也听不到一点声音，真感到很异样。

到了里面，我们漫步穿过玛丽·安托万内特式的音乐厅和王政复辟时期式样的小客厅，我觉得每张沙发、每张桌子后面都藏着客人，奉命屏息不动直到我们走过为止。当盖茨比关上“默顿学院图书室”的门时，我可以发誓我听到了那个猫头鹰眼睛的人突然发出了鬼似的笑声。

我们走上楼，穿过一间间仿古的卧室，里面铺满了玫瑰色和淡紫色的绸缎，摆满了色彩缤纷的鲜花，穿过一间间更衣室和弹子室，以及嵌有地下浴池的浴室——闯进一间卧室，里面有一个邋里邋遢穿着睡衣的人正在地板上做俯卧撑。那是“房客”克利普斯普林格先生。那天早上我看到过他如饥似渴地在海滩上徘徊。最后我们来到盖茨比本人的套间，包括一间卧室、一间浴室和一间小书房。我们在书房里

坐下，喝了一杯他从壁橱里拿出来的荨麻酒。

他一刻不停地看着黛西，因此我想他是在把房子里的每一件东西都按照那双他所钟爱的眼睛里的反应重新估价。有时他也神情恍惚地向四面凝视他自己的财物，仿佛在她这个惊心动魄的真人面前，所有这些东西就没有一件是真实的了。有一次他差点从楼梯上滚了下去。

他自己的卧室是所有屋子中最简朴的一间——只有梳妆台上点缀着一副纯金的梳妆用具。黛西高兴地拿起了刷子刷刷头发，引得盖茨比坐下来用手遮住眼睛笑了起来。

“真是最滑稽的事情，老兄，”他嘻嘻哈哈地说，“我简直不能……我一想要……”

显而易见，他已经历了两种精神状态，现在正进入第三种。他起初局促不安，继而大喜若狂，目前又由于她出现在眼前感到过分惊异而不能自持了。这件事他长年朝思暮想，梦寐以求，简直是咬紧了牙关期待着，感情强烈到不可思议的程度。此刻，由于反作用，他像一架发条上得太紧的时钟一样精疲力竭了。

过了一会，精神恢复之后，他为我们打开了两个非常讲究的特大衣橱，里面装满了他的西装、衬衣和领带，还有一打一打像砖头一样堆起来的衬衣。

“我有一个人在英国替我买衣服。每年春秋两季开始的时候，他都挑选一些东西寄给我。”

他拿出一堆衬衫，开始一件一件扔在我们面前，薄麻布衬衫、厚绸衬衫、细法兰绒衬衫都抖散了，五颜六色摆满了一桌。我们欣赏着的时候，他又继续抱来，那个柔软贵重的衬衣堆越来越高——条子衬衫、花纹衬衫、方格衬衫，珊瑚色的、苹果绿

的、浅紫色的、淡橘色的、上面绣着深蓝色的他的姓名的交织字母。突然之间，黛西发出了很不自然的声音，一下把头埋进衬衫堆里，号啕大哭起来。

“这些衬衫这么美，”她呜咽地说，她的声音在厚厚的衣堆里闷哑了。“我看了很伤心，因为我从来没见过这么——这么美的衬衫。”

看过房子之后，我们本来还要去看看庭园和游泳池、水上飞机和仲夏的繁花——但是盖茨比的窗外又下起雨来了，因此我们三人就站成一排远眺水波荡漾的海面。

“要不是有雾，我们可以看见海湾对面你家的房子，”盖茨比说，“你家码头的尽头总有一盏通宵不灭的绿灯。”

黛西蓦然伸过胳膊去挽着他的胳膊，但他似乎沉浸在他方才所说的话里。可能他突然想到那盏灯的巨大意义现在永远消失了。和那把他跟黛西分开的遥远距离相比较，那盏灯曾经似乎离她很近，几乎碰得着她。那就好像一颗星离月亮那么近一样。现在它又是码头上的一盏绿灯了。他的神奇的宝物已经减少了一件。

我开始在屋子里随便走走，在半明不暗的光线中看着各种各样模糊不清的摆饰。一个身穿游艇服的上年纪的男人的一张相片引起了我的注意，相片挂在他书桌前面的墙上。

“这是谁？”

“那个？那是丹·科迪先生，老兄。”

那名字听着有点耳熟。

“他已经死了。很多年前他是我最好的朋友。”

五斗橱上有一张盖茨比本人的小相片，也是穿着游艇服的——盖茨比昂着头，一副满不在乎的神气——显然是十八岁左右照的。

“我真爱这张相片，”黛西嚷嚷道，“这个笔直向后梳的发型！你从来没告诉我你留过笔直向后梳的发型，也没告诉我你有一艘游艇。”

“来看这个，”盖茨比连忙说，“这里有好多剪报——都是关于你的。”

他们俩并肩站着细看那些剪报。我正想要求看看那些红宝石，电话忽然响了，盖茨比就拿起了听筒。

“是的……噢，我现在不便谈……我现在不便谈，老兄……我说的是一个小城……他一定知道什么是小城……得啦，他对我们没什么用处，如果底特律就是他心目中的小城……”

他把电话挂上。

“到这儿来，快！”黛西在窗口喊道。

雨还在下，可是西方的乌云已经拨开，海湾上空翻滚着粉红色和金色的云霞。

“瞧那个，”她低声道，过了一刻又说，“我真想采一朵那种粉红色的云彩，把你放在上面推来推去。”

我这时想要走了，可是他们说什么也不答应；也许有我在场他们更可以心安理得地单独待在一起。

“我知道我们干什么好，”盖茨比说，“我们让克利普斯普林格弹钢琴。”

他走出屋子喊了一声“艾温”，又过了几分钟才回来，带来一个难为情的、面容有点憔悴的年轻人，一副玳瑁边眼镜，稀稀的金黄色头发。他现在衣服整齐一些了，穿着一件敞领的运动衫、一双运动鞋和一条颜色不清不白的帆布裤。

“我们刚才打扰您做体操了吗？”黛西有礼貌地问。

“我在睡觉，”克利普斯普林格先生窘迫之中脱口而出。“我是说，我本来在睡觉。后来我起床了……”

“克利普斯普林格会弹钢琴，”盖茨比打断了他的话说，“是不是，艾温，老兄？”

“我弹得不好。我不会……根本不弹。我好久没练……”

“我们到楼下去。”盖茨比打断了他的话。他拨了一个开关。整个房子立刻大放光明，灰暗的窗户都不见了。

在音乐厅里，盖茨比只扭开钢琴旁边的一盏灯。他用一根颤抖的火柴点燃了黛西的香烟，然后和她一道坐在屋子那边远远的一张长沙发上，那里除了地板上从过道里反映过来的一点亮光之外没有其他光线。

克利普斯普林格弹完了《爱情的安乐窝》之后，在长凳上转过身来，不高兴地在幽暗中张望着找盖茨比。

“我好久没弹了，你看。我告诉你我不会弹。我好久没弹……”

“别说那么多，老兄，”盖茨比命令道。“弹吧！”

“每天早上，

每天晚上，

玩得欢畅……”

外面风刮得呼呼的，海湾上传来一阵隐隐的雷声。此刻西卵所有的灯都亮了；电动火车满载归客，在雨中从纽约急驰而来。这是人事发生深刻变化的时辰，空气中洋溢着兴奋的情绪。

“有一件事是千真万确，

富的生财穷的生——孩子。

在这同时，

在这期间……”

我走过去告辞的时候，我看到那种惶惑的表情又出现在盖茨比脸上，仿佛他有点怀疑他目前幸福的性质。几乎五年了！那天下午一定有过一些时刻，黛西远不如他的梦想——并不是由于她本人的过错，而是由于他的幻梦有巨大的活力。他的幻梦超越了她，超越了一切。他以一种创造性的热情投入了这个幻梦，不断地添枝加叶，用飘来的每一根绚丽的羽毛加以缀饰。再多的激情或活力都赶不上一个人阴凄凄的心里所能集聚的情思。

我注视着他的时候，看得出来他在悄悄使自己适应眼前的现实。他伸出手去抓住她的手。她低低在他耳边说了点什么，他听了就感情冲动地转身向她。我看最使他入迷的是她那激动昂扬的声音，因为那是无论怎样梦想都不可能企及的——那声音是一曲永恒的歌。

他俩已经把我忘了，但黛西抬起头来瞥了一眼，伸出了手；盖茨比此刻压根儿不认识我了。我又看了他俩一眼，他们也看看我，好像远在天涯，沉浸在强烈的感情之中。我随即走出屋子，走下大理石台阶到雨里面去，留下他们两人在一起。

第六章

大概在这个时候，有一天早上，一个雄心勃勃的年轻记者从纽约来到盖茨比的大门口，问他有没有什么话要说。

“关于什么的话？”盖茨比很客气地问道。

“呃——发表个什么声明。”

在乱了五分钟之后事情才弄清楚。原来这个人在他报馆里曾经听人提到盖茨比的名字，可是为什么会提到他却不肯透露，或者他也没完全弄明白。这天他休息，于是就积极主动地跑出城来“看看”。

这不过是碰碰运气，然而这位记者的直觉却是对的。千百个人在他家做过客因而成为他的经历的权威，由于他们的宣扬，盖茨比的名声这一夏天越来越大，直到他只差一点就要成为新闻人物了。当时的各种传奇，像“通往加拿大的地下管道”之类，都和他挂上了钩，还有一个长期流传的谣言，说他根本不是住在一座房子里，而是住在一条船上，船看上去像座房子，并且沿着长岛海岸秘密地来回移动。究竟为什么北达科他州的杰姆斯·盖兹从这些谣言中得到满足，这倒不容易回答。

杰姆斯·盖兹——这是他的真姓名，至少是他法律上的姓名。他是在十七岁时改名换姓的，也是在他一生事业开端的那个特定时刻——当时他看见丹·科迪先生的游艇在苏必利尔湖上最险恶的沙洲上抛锚。那天下午身穿一件破旧的绿色运动衫和一条帆

布裤在沙滩上游荡的是杰姆斯·盖兹，但是后来借了一条小船，划到托洛美号去警告科迪，半小时之内可能起大风使他的船覆没的，已经是杰伊·盖茨比了。

我猜，就在当时他也早已把这个名字想好了。他的父母是碌碌无为的庄稼人——他的想象力根本从来没有真正承认他们是自己的父母。实际上长岛西卵的杰伊·盖茨比来自他对自己的柏拉图式的理念。他是上帝的儿子，——这个称号，如果有什么意义的话，就是字面的意思——因此他必须为他的天父效命，献身于一种博大、庸俗、华而不实的美。因此他虚构的恰恰是一个十七岁的小青年很可能会虚构的那种杰伊·盖茨比，而他始终不渝地忠于这个理想形象。

一年多来，他沿着苏必利尔湖南岸奔波，或是捕鲑鱼，或是捞蛤蜊，或是干任何其他为他挣来食宿的杂事。在那些风吹日晒的日子里，干着时松时紧的活计，他那晒得黝黑、越来越硬棒的身体过着天然的生活。他早就跟女人发生了关系，并且由于女人过分宠爱他，他倒瞧不起她们。他瞧不起年轻的处女，因为她们愚昧无知，他也瞧不起其他女人，因为她们为了一些事情大吵大闹，而那些事情由于他那惊人的自我陶醉，在他看来都是理所当然的。

但是他的内心却经常处于激荡不安之中。夜晚躺在床上时，各种离奇怪诞的幻想纷至沓来。一个绚丽得无法形容的宇宙展现在他脑海里，这时小钟在洗脸架上滴答滴答地响着，月亮用水一般的光浸泡着他乱七八糟扔在地上的衣服。每夜他都给他那些幻想的图案添枝加叶，一直等到昏沉的睡意降落在一个生动的场面之上，使他忘记了一切。有一阵子这些幻梦为他的想象力提供了一个发泄的途径；它们令人满意地暗示现实是不真实的，它们表明世界的磐石是牢牢地建立在仙女的翅膀上的。

几个月以前，一种追求他未来的光荣的本能促使他前往明尼苏达州南部路德教的小

圣奥拉夫学院。他在那里只待了两个星期，一方面由于学院对他的命运的鼓声、对命运本身麻木不仁而感到沮丧，一方面鄙视他为了挣钱作为学习费用而干的勤杂工作。后来他东漂西荡又回到了苏必利尔湖，那天他还在找点什么活儿干的时候，丹·科迪的游艇在湖边的浅滩上抛下锚来。

科迪当时五十岁，他是内华达州的银矿、育空地区、一八七五年以来每一次淘金热的产物。他做蒙大拿州铜的生意发了好几百万的财，结果虽然身体仍然健壮，可是脑子已经接近于糊涂。无数的女人对这个情况有所觉察，于是想方设法使他和他的钱分手。那个名叫埃拉·凯的女记者抓住他的弱点扮演了德曼特农夫人的角色，怂恿他乘上游艇去航海，她所用的那些不太体面的手腕是一九〇二年耸人听闻的报刊争相报道的新闻。他沿着过分殷勤好客的海岸航行了五年之后，就在这天驶入小姑娘湾，成为杰姆斯·盖兹命运的主宰。

年轻的盖兹，两手靠在船桨上，抬头望着有栏杆围着的甲板，在他眼中，那只船代表了世界上所有的美和魅力。我猜想他对科迪笑了一笑——他大概早已发现他笑的时候很讨人欢喜。不管怎样，科迪问了他几个问题（其中之一引出了这个崭新的名字），发觉他聪明伶俐而且雄心不小。几天之后他把他带到德卢思城，替他买了一件蓝色海员服、六条白帆布裤子和一顶游艇帽。等到托洛美号启程前往西印度群岛和巴巴里海岸的时候，盖茨比也走了。

他以一种不太明确的私人雇员身份在科迪手下工作——先后干过听差、大副、船长、秘书，甚至还当过监守，因为丹·科迪清醒的时候知道自己酒一喝醉什么挥金如土的傻事都干得出来，因此他越来越信赖盖茨比，以防止这一类的意外事故。这种安排延续了五年，在这期间那艘船环绕美洲大陆三次。它本来可能无限期地继续下去，要不是有一晚在波士顿，埃拉·凯上了船，一星期后丹·科迪就毫不客气地死掉

了。

我记得他那张挂在盖茨比卧室里的相片，一个头发花白、服饰花哨的老头子，一张冷酷无情、内心空虚的脸——典型的沉湎酒色的拓荒者，这帮人在美国生活的某一阶段把边疆妓院酒馆的粗野狂暴带回到了东部滨海地区。盖茨比酒喝得极少，这得间接地归功于科迪。有时在欢闹的宴席上女人会把香槟揉进他的头发；他本人却养成了习惯不去沾酒。

他也正是从科迪那里继承了钱——一笔二万五千美元的遗赠。他并没拿到钱。他始终也没懂得人家用来对付他的法律手段，但是千百万财产剩下多少通通归了埃拉·凯。他只落了他那异常恰当的教育：杰伊·盖茨比的模糊轮廓已经逐渐充实成为一个血肉丰满的人了。

这一切都是他好久以后才告诉我的，但是我在这里写了下来，为的是驳斥早先那些关于他的来历的荒唐谣言，那些都是连一点儿影子也没有的事。再有，他是在一个十分混乱的时刻告诉我的，那时关于他的种种传闻我已经到了将信将疑的地步。所以我现在利用这个短暂的停顿，仿佛趁盖茨比喘口气的机会，把这些误解清除一下。

在我和他的交往之中，这也是一个停顿。有好几个星期我既没和他见面，也没在电话里听到过他的声音——大部分时间我是在纽约跟乔丹四处跑，同时极力讨她那老朽的姑妈的欢心——但是我终于在一个星期日下午到他家去了。我待了还没两分钟就有一个人把汤姆·布坎农带进来喝杯酒。我自然吃了一惊，但是真正令人惊奇的却是以前竟然还没发生过这样的事。

他们一行三人是骑马来的——汤姆和一个姓斯隆的男人，还有一个身穿棕色骑装的

漂亮女人，是以前来过的。

“我很高兴见到你们，”盖茨比站在阳台上说，“我很高兴你们光临。”

仿佛他们承情似的！

“请坐，请坐。抽支香烟或者抽支雪茄。”他在屋子里跑来跑去，忙着打铃喊人。“我马上就让人给你们送点什么喝的来。”

汤姆的到来使他受到很大震动。但是他反正会感到局促不安，直到他招待了他们一点什么才行，因为他也隐约知道他们就是为了这个才来的。斯隆先生什么都不要。来杯柠檬水？不要，谢谢。来点香槟吧？什么都不要，谢谢……对不起……

“你们骑马骑得很痛快吧？”

“这一带的路很好。”

“大概来往的汽车……”

“是嘛。”

刚才介绍的时候汤姆只当做彼此是初次见面，此刻盖茨比突然情不自禁地掉脸朝着他。

“我相信我们以前在哪儿见过面，布坎农先生。”

“噢，是的，”汤姆生硬而有礼貌地说，他显然并不记得。“我们是见过的，我记得很清楚。”

“大概两个星期以前。”

“好啦。你是跟尼克在一起的。”

“我认识你太太，” 盖茨比接下去说，几乎有一点挑衅的意味。

“是吗？”

汤姆掉脸朝着我。

“你住在这附近吗，尼克？”

“就在隔壁。”

“是吗？”

斯隆先生没有参加谈话，而是大模大样地仰靠在他的椅子上；那个女的也没说什么——直到两杯姜汁威士忌下肚之后，她忽然变得有说有笑了。

“我们都来参加你下次的晚会，盖茨比先生，” 她提议说，“你看好不好？”

“当然好了；你们能来，我太高兴了。”

“那很好吧，” 斯隆先生毫不承情地说。“呃——我看该回家了。”

“请不要忙着走，” 盖茨比劝他们。他现在已经能控制自己，并且他要多看看汤姆。“你们何不——你们何不就在这儿吃晚饭呢？说不定纽约还有一些别的人会来。”

“你到我家来吃晚饭，” 那位太太热烈地说，“你们俩都来。”

这也包括了我。斯隆先生站起身来。

“我是当真的，”她坚持说，“我真希望你们来。都坐得下。”

盖茨比疑惑地看着我。他想去，他也看不出斯隆先生打定了主意不让他去。

“我恐怕去不了，”我说。

“那么你来，”她极力怂恿盖茨比一个人。

斯隆先生凑着她耳边咕哝了一下。

“我们如果马上就走，一点都不会晚的，”她固执地大声说。

“我没有马，”盖茨比说。“我在军队里骑过马的，但是我自己从来没买过马。我只好开车跟你们走。对不起，等一下我就来。”

我们其余几个人走到外面阳台上，斯隆和那位太太站在一边。开始气冲冲地交谈。

“我的天，我相信这家伙真的要来，”汤姆说。“难道他不知道她并不要他来吗？”

“她说她要他来的嘛。”

“她举行盛大的宴会，他在那儿一个人都不会认得的。”他皱皱眉头。“我真纳闷他到底在哪儿认识黛西的。天晓得，也许我的思想太古板，但是这年头女人家到处乱跑，我可看不惯。她们遇上各式各样的怪物。”

忽然间斯隆先生和那位太太走下台阶，随即上了马。

“来吧，”斯隆先生对汤姆说，“我们已经晚了。我们一定得走了。”然后对我说，“请你告诉他我们不能等了，行吗？”

汤姆跟我握握手，我们其余几个人彼此冷冷地点了点头，他们就骑着马沿着车道小跑起来，很快消失在八月的树阴里，这时盖茨比，手里拿着帽子和薄大衣，正从大门里走出来。

汤姆对于黛西单独四处乱跑显然放不下心，因为下一个星期六晚上他和她一道来参加盖茨比的晚会。也许是由于他的在场，那次晚会有一种特殊的沉闷气氛——它鲜明地留在我记忆里，与那个夏天盖茨比的其他晚会迥然不同。还是那些同样的人，或者至少是同一类的人、同样的源源不绝的香槟、同样的五颜六色、七嘴八舌的喧闹，可是我觉得无形中有一种不愉快的感觉，弥漫着一种以前从没有过的恶感。要不然，或许是我本来已经逐渐习惯于这一套，逐渐认为西卵是一个独立完整的世界，自有它独特的标准和大人物，首屈一指因为它并不感到相形见绌，而此刻我却通过黛西的眼睛重新去看这一切。要通过新的眼睛去看那些你已经花了很多气力才适应的事物，那总是令人难受的。

他们在黄昏时刻到达，然后当我们几人漫步走到几百名珠光宝气的客人当中时，黛西的声音在她喉咙里玩着呢呢喃喃的花样。

“这些东西真叫我兴奋，”她低声说，“如果你今晚上任何时候想吻我，尼克，你让我知道好了，我一定高兴为你安排。只要提我的名字就行，或者出示一张绿色的请帖。我正在散发绿色的……”

“四面看看，”盖茨比敦促她。

“我正在四面看啊。我真开心极……”

“你一定看到许多你听见过的人物的面孔。”

汤姆傲慢的眼睛向人群一扫。

“我们平时不大外出，”他说，“实际上，我刚才正在想我这里一个人都不认识。”

“也许你认得那位小姐。”盖茨比指出一位如花似玉的美人，端庄地坐在一棵白梅树下。汤姆和黛西目不转睛地看着，认出来这是一位一向只在银幕上见到的大明星，几乎不敢相信是真的。

“她真美啊，”黛西说。

“站在她身边弯着腰的是她的导演。”

盖茨比礼貌周全地领着他们向一群又一群的客人介绍。

“布坎农夫人……布坎农先生，”踌躇片刻之后，他又补充说，“马球健将。”

“不是的，”汤姆连忙否认，“我可不是。”

但是盖茨比显然喜欢这个名称的含义，因为以后整个晚上汤姆就一直是“马球健将”。

“我从来没见过这么多名人，”黛西兴奋地说，“我喜欢那个人……他叫什么名字来着？……就是鼻子有点发青的。”

盖茨比报了那人的姓名，并说他是一个小制片商。

“好嘛，我反正喜欢他。”

“我宁愿不做马球健将，”汤姆愉快地说，“我倒宁愿以……以一个默默无闻的人的

身份看看这么多有名的人。”

黛西和盖茨比跳了舞。我记得我当时看到他跳着优雅的老式狐步舞感到很诧异——我以前从未见过他跳舞。后来他俩溜到我家，在我的台阶上坐了半个小时，她让我待在园子里把风。“万一着火或是发大水，”她解释道，“或是什么天灾啦。”

我们正在一起坐下来吃晚饭时，汤姆又从默默无闻中出现了。“我跟那边几个人一起吃饭，行吗？”他说，“有一个家伙正在大讲笑话。”

“去吧，”黛西和颜悦色地回答，“如果你要留几个住址下来，这里是我的小金铅笔。”……过了一会她四面张望了一下，对我说那个女孩“俗气可是漂亮”，于是我明白除了她单独跟盖茨比待在一起的半小时之外，她玩得并不开心。

我们这一桌的人喝得特别醉。这得怪我不好——盖茨比被叫去听电话，又碰巧两星期前我还觉得这些人挺有意思。但是当时我觉得好玩的今晚变得索然无味了。

“你感觉怎么样，贝达克小姐？”

我同她说话的这个姑娘正在想慢慢倒在我的肩上，可是并没成功。听到这个问题，她坐起身来，睁开了眼睛。

“什么？”

一个大块头、懒洋洋的女人，本来一直在怂恿黛西明天到本地俱乐部去和她一起打高尔夫球的，现在来为贝达克小姐辩白了：

“噢，她现在什么事也没有了。她每次五六杯鸡尾酒下肚，总是这样大喊大叫。我跟她说她不当喝酒。”

“我是不喝酒，”受到指责的那个人随口说道。

“我们听到你嚷嚷，于是我跟这位希维特大夫说：‘那里有人需要您帮忙，大夫。’”

“她非常感激，我相信，”另一位朋友用并不感激的口气说，“可是你把她的头按到游泳池里去，把她的衣服全搞湿了。”

“我最恨的就是把我的头按到游泳池里，”贝达克小姐咕哝着说，“有一回在新泽西州他们差一点没把我淹死。”

“那你就应当喝酒嘛，”希维特大夫堵她的嘴说。

“说你自己吧！”贝达克小姐激烈地大喊道，“你的手发抖。我才不会让你给我开刀哩！”

情况就是这样。我记得的差不多是最后的一件事是我和黛西站在一起望着那位电影导演和他的“大明星”。他们仍然在那棵白梅树下，他们的脸快要贴到一起了，中间只隔着一线淡淡的月光。我忽然想到他整个晚上大概一直在非常非常慢地弯下腰来，才终于和她靠得这么近，然后正在我望着的这一刻，我看见他弯下最后一点距离，亲吻了她的面颊。

“我喜欢她，”黛西说，“我觉得她美极了。”

但是其他的一切她都讨厌——而且是不容置辩的，因为这并不是一种姿态，而是一种感情。她十分厌恶西卵，这个由百老汇强加在一个长岛渔村上的没有先例的“胜地”——厌恶它那不安于陈旧的委婉辞令的粗犷活力，厌恶那种驱使它的居民沿着一条捷径从零跑到零的过分突兀的命运。她正是在这种她所不了解的单纯之中看到

了什么可怕的东西。

他们在等车子开过来的时候，我和他们一同坐在大门前的台阶上。前面这里很暗；只有敞开的门向幽暗的黎明射出十平方英尺的亮光。有时楼上化妆室的遮帘上有一个人影掠过，然后又出现一个人影，络绎不绝的女客对着一面看不见的镜子涂脂抹粉。

“这个姓盖茨比的究竟是谁？”汤姆突然质问我，“一个大私酒贩子？”

“你在哪儿听来的？”我问他。

“我不是听来的。我猜的。有很多这样的暴发户都是大私酒贩子，你要知道。”

“盖茨比可不是，”我简慢地说。

他沉默了一会。汽车道上的小石子在他脚底下喀嚓作响。

“我说，他一定花了很大的气力才搜罗到这么一大帮牛头马面。”

一阵微风吹动了黛西的毛茸茸的灰皮领子。

“至少他们比我们认得的人有趣，”她有点勉强地说。

“看上去你并不怎么感兴趣嘛。”

“噢，我很感兴趣。”

汤姆哈哈一笑，把脸转向我。

“当那个女孩让她给她来个冷水淋浴的时候，你有没有注意到黛西的脸？”

黛西跟着音乐沙哑而有节奏的低声唱了起来，把每个字都唱出一种以前从未有过、以后也决不会再有的意义。当曲调升高的时候，她的嗓音也跟着改变，悠扬婉转，正是女低音的本色，而且每一点变化都在空气中散发出一点她那温暖的人情味很浓的魔力。

“来的人有好多并不是邀请来的，”她忽然说。“那个女孩子就没有接到邀请。他们干脆闯上门来，而他又太客气，不好意思谢绝。”

“我很想知道他是什么人，又是干什么的，”汤姆固执地说。“并且我一定要去打听清楚。”

“我马上就可以告诉你，”她答道。“他是开药房的，好多家药房。他一手创办起来的。”

那辆姗姗来迟的大型轿车沿着汽车道开了上来。

“晚安，尼克，”黛西说。

她的目光离开了我，朝着灯光照亮的最上一层台阶看去，在那里一支当年流行的哀婉动人的小华尔兹舞曲《凌晨三点钟》正从敞开的大门传出来。话说回来，正是在盖茨比的晚会的随随便便的气氛之中，就有她自己的世界中完全没有的种种浪漫的可能性。那支歌曲里面有什么东西仿佛在呼唤她回到里面去呢？现在在这幽暗的、难以预测的时辰里会发生什么事情呢？也许会光临一位令人难以置信的客人，一位世上少有的令人惊异不置的佳人，一位真正艳丽夺目的少女，只要对盖茨比看上一眼，只要一刹那魔术般的相逢，她就可以把五年来坚贞不移的爱情一笔勾销。

那夜我待得很晚，盖茨比要我待到他可以脱身，于是我就在花园里徘徊，一直待到

最后一群游泳的客人，又寒冷又兴奋，从黑黝黝的海滩上跑上来，一直等到楼上各间客房里的灯都灭了。等到他最后走下台阶时，那晒得黝黑的皮肤比往常更紧地绷在他脸上，他的眼睛发亮而有倦意。

“她不喜欢这个晚会，”他马上就说。

“她当然喜欢啦。”

“她不喜欢，”他固执地说。“她玩得不开心。”

他不讲话了，但我猜他有满腔说不出的郁闷。

“我觉得离开她很远，”他说。“很难使她理解。”

“你是说舞会的事吗？”

“舞会？”他一弹指就把他所有开过的舞会都勾销了。“老兄，舞会是无关紧要的。”

他所要求于黛西的不下于要她跑去跟汤姆说：“我从来没有爱过你。”等她用那句话把四年一笔勾销之后，他俩就可以研究决定那些需要采取的更加实际的步骤。其中之一就是，等她恢复了自由，他俩就回路易斯维尔去，从她家里出发到教堂去举行婚礼——就仿佛是五年以前一样。

“可是她不理解，”他说。“她过去是能够理解的。我们往往在一起坐上几个钟点……”

他忽然停住不说了，沿着一条布满了果皮、丢弃的小礼物和踩烂的残花的小道走来走去。

“我看对她不宜要求过高，”我冒昧地说，“你不能重温旧梦的。”

“不能重温旧梦？”他大不以为然地喊道，“哪儿的话，我当然能够！”

他发狂地东张西望，仿佛他的旧梦就隐藏在这里，他的房子的阴影里，几乎一伸手就可以抓到的。

“我要把一切都安排得跟过去一模一样，”他说，一面坚决地点点头。“她会看到的。”

他滔滔不绝地大谈往事，因此我揣测他想要重新获得一点什么东西，也许是那进入他对黛西的热恋之中的关于他自己的某种理念。从那时以来，他的生活一直是凌乱不堪的，但是假如他一旦能回到某个出发点，慢慢地重新再走一遍，他可以发现那东西是什么……

……一个秋天的夜晚，五年以前，落叶纷纷的时候，他俩走在街上，走到一处没有树的地方，人行道被月光照得发白。他们停了下来，面对面站着。那是一个凉爽的夜晚，那是一年两度季节变换的时刻，空气中洋溢着那种神秘的兴奋。家家户户宁静的灯火仿佛在向外面的黑暗吟唱，天上的星星中间仿佛也有繁忙的活动。盖茨比从他的眼角里看到，一段段的人行道其实构成一架梯子，通向树顶上空一个秘密的地方——他可以攀登上去，如果他独自攀登的话，一登上去他就可以吮吸生命的浆液，大口吞咽那无与伦比的神奇的奶汁。

当黛西洁白的脸贴近他自己的脸时，他的心越跳越快。他知道他一跟这个姑娘亲吻，并把他那些无法形容的憧憬和她短暂的呼吸永远结合在一起，他的心灵就再也不会像上帝的心灵一样自由驰骋了。因此他等着，再倾听一会那已经在一颗星上敲响的音叉。然后他吻了她。经他的嘴唇一碰，她就像一朵鲜花一样为他开放，于是

这个理想的化身就完成了。

他的这番话，甚至他难堪的感伤，使我回想起一点什么……我很久以前在什么地方听过的一个迷离恍惚的节奏，几句零落的歌词。一会儿的工夫，有一句话快到了嘴边，我的两片嘴唇像哑巴一样张开，仿佛除了一丝受惊的空气之外还有别的什么在上面挣扎着要出来。但是嘴唇发不出声音，因此我几乎想起的东西就永远无法表达了。

[1] 苏必利尔湖：美国五大湖之一。

[2] 育空地区：加拿大西部地区，十九世纪末叶发现新金矿。

[3] 德曼特农夫人：十七世纪法国国王路易十四的情妇，后秘密成婚。

[4] 德卢思：苏必利尔湖上的一个港口。

[5] 巴巴里海岸：埃及以西的北非伊斯兰教地区。

第七章

正在人们对盖茨比的好奇心达到顶点的时候，有一个星期六晚上他别墅里的灯都没有亮，——于是，他作为特里马尔乔的生涯，当初莫名其妙地开始的，现在又莫名其妙地结束了。我逐渐才发觉那些乘兴而来的一辆辆汽车，稍停片刻之后又扫兴地开走了。我疑心他是否病了，于是走过去看看——一个面目狰狞的陌生仆人从门口满腹狐疑地斜着眼看我。

“盖茨比先生病了吗？”

“没有。”停了一会他才慢吞吞地、勉强地加了一声“先生”。

“我好久没看见他了，很不放心。告诉他卡罗威先生来过。”

“谁？”他粗鲁地问。

“卡罗威。”

“卡罗威。好啦，我告诉他。”

他粗鲁地砰的一声关上了大门。

我的芬兰女用人告诉我，盖茨比早在一个星期前就辞退了家里的每一个仆人，另外雇用了五六个人，这些人从来不到西卵镇上去受那些开店的贿赂，而是打电话订购数量不多的生活用品。据食品店送货的伙计报道，厨房看上去像个猪圈，而镇上一般的看法是，这些新人压根儿不是什么仆人。

第二天盖茨比打电话给我。

“准备出门吗？”我问。

“没有，老兄。”

“我听说你把所有的仆人都辞了。”

“我需要的是不爱讲闲话的人。黛西经常来——总是在下午。”

原来如此，由于她看了不赞成，这座大酒店就像纸牌搭的房子一样整个坍掉了。

“他们是沃尔夫山姆要帮点儿忙的人。他们都是兄弟姐妹。他们开过一家小旅

馆。”

“我明白了。”

他是应黛西的请求打电话来的——我明天是否可以到她家吃午饭？贝克小姐会去的。半小时之后，黛西亲自打电话来，似乎因为知道我答应去而感到宽慰。一定出了什么事。然而我却不能相信他们竟然会选这样一个场合来大闹一场——尤其是盖茨比早先在花园里所提出的那种令人难堪的场面。

第二天天气酷热，几乎是那个夏天最后一天，肯定是最热的一天。当我乘的火车从地道里钻出来驶进阳光里时，只有全国饼干公司热辣辣的汽笛打破了中午闷热的静寂。客车里的草椅垫热得简直要着火了；坐在我旁边的一个妇女起先很斯文地让汗水渗透衬衣，后来，她的报纸在她手指下面也变潮了时，她长叹一声，在酷热中颓然地往后一倒。她的钱包啪的一声掉到了地下。

“喔唷！”她吃惊地喊道。

我懒洋洋地弯下腰把它捡了起来，递还给了她，手伸得远远的，捏着钱包的一个角，表示我并无染指的意图——可是附近的每一个人，包括那女人，照样怀疑我。

“热！”查票员对面熟的乘客说，“够呛的天气！……热！……热！……热！……你觉得够热的吗？热吗？你觉得……？”

我的月季票递还给我时上面留下了他手的黑汗渍。在这种酷热的天气还有谁去管他亲吻的是谁的朱唇，管他是谁的脑袋偎湿了他心前的睡衣口袋！

……盖茨比和我在门口等开门的时候，一阵微风吹过布坎农的住宅的门廊，带来电话铃的声音。

“主人的尸体？”男管家大声向话筒里嚷道，“对不起，太太，可是我们不能提供——今天中午太热了，没法碰！”

实际上他讲的是：“是……是……我去瞧瞧。”

他放下了话筒，朝我们走过来，头上冒着汗珠，接过我们的硬壳草帽。

“夫人在客厅里等您哩！”他喊道，一面不必要地指着方向。在这酷热的天气，每一个多余的手势都是滥用生活的公有财富。

这间屋子外面有遮篷挡着，又阴暗又凉快。黛西和乔丹躺在一张巨大的长沙发上，好像两座银像压住自己的白色衣裙，不让电扇的呼呼响的风吹动。

“我们动不了了，”她们俩同声说。

乔丹的手指，黝黑色上面搽了一层白粉，在我手指里搁了一会。

“体育家托马斯·布坎农先生呢？”我问。

就在同时我听见了他的声音，粗犷、低沉、沙哑，在门廊的电话上说话。

盖茨比站在绯红的地毯中央，用着了迷的目光向四周张望。黛西看着他，发出了她那甜蜜、动人的笑声；微微的一阵粉从她胸口升入空中。

“有谣言说，”乔丹悄悄地说，“那边是汤姆的情人在打电话。”

我们都不说话。门廊里的声音气恼地提高了：“那好吧，我根本不把车子卖给你了……我根本不欠你什么情……至于你在午饭时候来打扰我，我根本不答应！”

“挂上话筒在讲，”黛西冷嘲热讽地说。

“不，他不是，”我向她解释道，“这是一笔确有其事的交易。我碰巧知道这件事。”

汤姆猛然推开了门，他粗壮的身躯片刻间堵住了门口，然后急匆匆走进了屋子。

“盖茨比先生！”他伸出了他那宽大、扁平的手，很成功地掩饰住对他的厌恶。“我很高兴见到您，先生。……尼克……”

“给我们搞一杯冷饮吧！”黛西大声说。

他又离开屋子以后，她站起身来，走到盖茨比面前，把他的脸拉了下来，吻他的嘴。

“你知道我爱你，”她喃喃地说。

“你忘了还有一位女客在座，”乔丹说。

黛西故意装傻回过头看看。

“你也跟尼克接吻吧。”

“多低级、多下流的女孩子！”

“我不在乎！”黛西大声说，同时在砖砌的壁炉前面跳起舞来。后来她想起了酷热的天气，又不好意思地在沙发上坐了下来，正在这时一个穿着新洗的衣服的保姆搀着一个小女孩走进屋子来。

“心——肝，宝——贝，”她嗲声嗲气地说，一面伸出她的胳膊。“到疼你的亲娘这里来。”

保姆一撒手，小孩就从屋子那边跑过来，羞答答地一头埋进她母亲的衣裙里。

“心——肝，宝——贝啊！妈妈把粉弄到你黄黄的头发上了吗？站起身来，说声——您好。”

盖茨比和我先后弯下腰来，握一握不情愿的小手。然后他惊奇地盯着孩子看。我想他以前从来没有真正相信过有这个孩子存在。

“我在午饭前就打扮好了，”孩子说，急切地把脸转向黛西。

“那是因为你妈要显摆你。”她低下头来把脸伏在雪白的小脖子上唯一的皱纹里。“你啊，你这个宝贝。你这个独一无二的小宝贝。”

“是啊，”小孩平静地答应。“乔丹阿姨也穿了一件白衣裳。”

“你喜欢妈妈的朋友吗？”黛西把她转过来，让她面对着盖茨比。“你觉得他们漂亮吗？”

“爸爸在哪儿？”

“她长得不像她父亲，”黛西解释说，“她长得像我。她的头发和脸型都像我。”

黛西朝后靠在沙发上。保姆走上前一步，伸出了手。

“来吧，帕咪。”

“再见，乖乖！”

很懂规矩的小孩依依不舍地回头看了一眼，抓着保姆的手，就被拉到门外去，正好汤姆回来，后面跟着四杯杜松子利克酒，里面装满了冰块喀嚓作响。

盖茨比端过一杯酒来。

“它们瞧上去真凉快，”他说，看得出来他是有点紧张。

我们迫不及待地大口大口地把酒喝下去。

“我在什么地方看到过，说太阳一年年越来越热，”汤姆很和气地说，“好像地球不久就会掉进太阳里去——等一等——恰恰相反——太阳一年年越来越冷。”

“到外面来吧，”他向盖茨比提议说，“我想请你看看我这个地方。”

我跟他们一起到外面游廊上去。在绿色的海湾上，海水在酷热中停滞不动，一条小帆船慢慢向比较新鲜的海水移动。盖茨比的眼光片刻间追随着这条船；他举起了手，指着海湾的对面。

“我就在你正对面。”

“可不是嘛。”

我们的眼睛掠过玫瑰花圃，掠过炎热的草坪，掠过海岸边那些大热天的乱草堆。那只小船的白翼在蔚蓝清凉的天际的背景上慢慢地移动。再往前是水波荡漾的海洋和星罗棋布的宝岛。

“那是多么好的运动，”汤姆点着头说，“我真想出去和他在那边玩上个把钟头。”

我们在餐厅里吃的午饭，里面也遮得很阴凉，大家把紧张的欢笑和凉啤酒一起喝下肚去。

“我们今天下午做什么好呢？”黛西大声说，“还有明天，还有今后三十年？”

“不要这样病态，”乔丹说。“秋天一到，天高气爽，生活就又重新开始了。”

“可是天真热得要命，”黛西固执地说，差点要哭出来了。“一切又都混乱不堪。咱们都进城去吧！”

她的声音继续在热浪中挣扎，向它冲击着，把无知觉的热气塑成一些形状。

“我听说过把马房改作汽车间，”汤姆在对盖茨比说，“但是我是第一个把汽车间变成马房的人。”

“谁愿意进城去？”黛西执拗地问道。盖茨比的眼睛慢慢朝她看过去。“啊，”她喊道，“你看上去真凉快。”

他们的眼光相遇了，他们彼此目不转睛地看着对方，超然物外。她好不容易才把视线转回到餐桌上。

“你看上去总是那么凉快，”她重复说。

她已经告诉他她爱他，汤姆·布坎农也看出来了。他大为震惊。他的嘴微微张开，他看看盖茨比，又看看黛西，仿佛他刚刚认出她是他很久以前就认识的一个人。

“你很像广告里那个人，”她恬然地继续说，“你知道广告里那个人……”

“好吧，”汤姆赶紧打断了她的话。“我非常乐意进城去。走吧——我们大家都进城去。”

他站了起来，他的眼睛还是在盖茨比和他妻子之间闪来闪去。谁都没动。

“走啊！”他有点冒火了。“到底怎么回事？咱们要进城，那就走吧。”

他把杯中剩下的啤酒举到了唇边，他的手由于他尽力控制自己而在发抖。黛西的声音促使我们站了起来，走到外面炽热的石子汽车道上。

“我们马上就走吗？”她不以为然地说，“就像这样？难道我们不让人家先抽支烟吗？”

“吃饭的时候大家从头到尾都在抽烟。”

“哦，咱们高高兴兴地玩吧，”她央求他。“天太热了，别闹吧。”

他没有回答。

“随你的便吧，”她说，“来吧，乔丹。”

她们上楼去作好准备，我们三个男的就站在那儿用我们的脚把滚烫的小石子踢来踢去。一弯银月已经悬在西天。盖茨比已经开口说话又改变了主意，但汤姆也转过身来面对着他等他说。

“你的马房是在这里吗？”盖茨比勉强地问道。

“沿这条路下去大约四分之一英里。”

“哦。”

停了一会。

“我真不明白进城去干什么，”汤姆怒气冲冲地说，“女人总是心血来潮……”

“我们带点儿什么东西喝吗？”黛西从楼上窗口喊道。

“我去拿点威士忌，”汤姆答道。他走进屋子里去。

盖茨比硬邦邦地转向我说：

“我在他家里不能说什么，老兄。”

“她的声音很不谨慎，”我说，“它充满了……”我犹疑了一下。

“她的声音充满了金钱，”他忽然说。

正是这样。我以前从来没有领悟过。它是充满了金钱——这正是她声音里抑扬起伏的无穷无尽的魅力的源泉，金钱丁当的声音，铙钹齐鸣的歌声……高高的在一座白色的宫殿里，国王的女儿，黄金女郎……

汤姆从屋子里出来，一面把一瓶一夸脱酒用毛巾包起来，后面跟着黛西和乔丹，两人都戴着亮晶晶的硬布做的又小又紧的帽子，手臂上搭着薄纱披肩。

“大家都坐我的车去好吗？”盖茨比提议。他摸了摸滚烫的绿皮坐垫。“我应当把它停在树阴里的。”

“这车是用普通排挡吗？”汤姆问。

“是的。”

“好吧，你开我的小轿车，让我开你的车进城。”

这个建议不合盖茨比的口味。

“恐怕汽油不多了，”他表示不同意。

“汽油多得很，”汤姆闹嚷嚷地说。他看了看油表。“如果用光了，我可以找一个药房停下来。这年头药房里你什么东西都买得到。”

这句似乎没有什么意义的话说完之后，大家沉默了一会。黛西皱着眉头瞧瞧汤姆，同时盖茨比脸上掠过一种难以形容的表情；既十分陌生又似曾相识，仿佛我以前只是听人用言语描述过似的。

“走吧，黛西，”汤姆说，一面用手把她朝盖茨比的车子推过去。“我带你坐这辆马戏团的花车。”

他打开车门，但她从他手臂的圈子里走了出去。

“你带尼克和乔丹去。我们开小轿车跟在你后面。”

她紧挨着盖茨比走，用手摸着他的上衣。乔丹、汤姆和我坐进盖茨比车子的前座，汤姆试着扳动不熟悉的排挡，接着我们就冲进了闷热，把他们甩在后面看不见的地方。

“你们看到那个没有？”汤姆问。

“看到什么？”

他敏锐地看着我，明白了我和乔丹一定一直就知道。

“你们以为我很傻，是不是？”他说，“也许我是傻，但是有时候我有一种——几乎是一种第二视觉，它告诉我该怎么办。也许你们不相信这个，但是科学……”

他停了一下。当务之急追上了他，把他从理论深渊的边缘拉了回来。

“我已经对这个家伙做了一番小小的调查，”他继续说，“我大可以调查得更深入一些，要是我知道……”

“你是说你找过一个巫婆吗？”乔丹幽默地问。

“什么？”他摸不着头脑，瞪眼看着我们在哈哈笑。“巫婆？”

“去问盖茨比的事。”

“问盖茨比的事！不，我没有。我刚才说我已经对他的来历做过一番小小的调查。”

“结果你发现他是牛津大学毕业生，”乔丹帮忙地说。

“牛津大学毕业生！”他完全不相信。“他要是才他妈的怪哩！他穿一套粉红色衣服。”

“不过他还是牛津毕业生。”

“新墨西哥州的牛津镇，”汤姆嗤之以鼻地说，“或者类似的地方。”

“我说，汤姆，你既然这样瞧不起人，那么为什么请他吃午饭呢？”乔丹气恼地质问道。

“黛西请他的；她是在我们结婚以前认识他的——天晓得在什么地方！”

啤酒的酒性已过，我们现在都感到烦躁，又因为意识到这一点，我们就一声不响地开了一会车子。然后当T·J·埃克尔堡大夫褪色的眼睛在大路的前方出现时，我想起了

盖茨比提出的关于汽油不够的警告。

“我们有足够的汽油开到城里，” 汤姆说。

“可是这里就有一家车行，” 乔丹提出了反对。“我可不要在这种大热天抛锚。”

汤姆不耐烦地把两个刹车都踩了，车子扬起一阵尘土突然在威尔逊的招牌下面停了下来。过了一会老板从车行的里面走了出来，两眼呆呆地盯着看我们的车子。

“给我们加点汽油！” 汤姆粗声大气地叫道，“你以为我们停下来干什么——欣赏风景吗？”

“我病了，” 威尔逊站着不动说道，“病了一整天啦。”

“怎么啦？”

“我身体都垮了。”

“那么我要自己动手吗？” 汤姆问，“你刚才在电话里听上去还挺好的嘛。”

威尔逊很吃力地从门口阴凉的地方走出来，喘着大气把汽油箱的盖子拧了下来。在太阳里他的脸色发青。

“我并不是有意在午饭时打扰你，” 他说，“可是我急需用钱，因此我想知道你那辆旧车打算怎么办。”

“你喜欢这一辆吗？” 汤姆问。“我上星期才买的。”

“好漂亮的黄车，” 威尔逊说，一面费劲地打着油。

“想买吗？”

“没门儿，” 威尔逊淡淡地一笑。“不想这个，可是我可以在那部车上赚点钱。”

“你要钱干什么，有什么突然的需要？”

“我在这儿待得太久了。我想离开这里。我老婆和我想搬到西部去。”

“你老婆想去？” 汤姆吃惊地叫道。

“她说要去，说了有十年了。” 他靠在加油机上休息了一会，用手搭在眼睛上遮住阳光。“现在她真的要去了，不管她想不想去。我要让她离开这里。”

小轿车从我们身边急驰而过，扬起了一阵尘土，车上有人挥了挥手。

“我该付你多少钱？” 汤姆粗鲁地问道。

“就在这两天我才发现了一点蹊跷的事情，” 威尔逊说，“这就是我为什么要离开这里的原因。这就是我为什么为那辆车子打扰你的原因。”

“我该付你多少钱？”

“一块两角。”

酷烈的热浪已经开始搞得我头昏眼花，因此我有一会儿感到很不舒服，然后才意识到，到那时为止他的疑心还没落到汤姆身上。他发现了莱特尔背着他在另外一个世界里有她自己的生活，而这个震动使他的身体患病了。我盯着他看看，又盯着汤姆看看，他在不到半小时以前也有了同样的发现——因此我想到人们在智力或种族方面的任何差异都远不如病人和健康的人二者之间的差异那么深刻。威尔逊病得那么

厉害，因此看上去好像犯了罪，犯了不可饶恕的罪——仿佛他刚刚把一个可怜的姑娘的肚子搞大了。

“我把那辆车子卖给你吧，” 汤姆说，“我明天下午给你送来。”

那一带地方一向隐隐约约使人感到心神不安，甚至在下午耀眼的阳光里也一样，因此现在我掉过头去，仿佛有人要我提防背后有什么东西。在灰堆上方，T·J·埃克尔堡大夫的巨眼在守望着，但是过了一会我觉察另外一双眼睛正在从不到二十英尺以外聚精会神地注视着我们。

在车行上面一扇窗户面前，窗帘向旁边拉开了一点，茉特尔·威尔逊正在向下窥视着这辆车子。她那样全神贯注，因此她毫不觉察有人在注意她，一种接一种的感情在她脸上流露出来，好像物体出现在一张慢慢显影的照片上。她的表情熟悉得有点蹊跷——这是我时常在女人脸上看到的表情，可是在茉特尔·威尔逊的脸上，这种表情似乎毫无意义而且难以理解，直到我明白她那两只充满妒火、睁得大大的眼睛并不是盯在汤姆身上，而是盯在乔丹·贝克身上，原来她以为乔丹是他的妻子。

一个简单的头脑陷入慌乱时是非同小可的，等到我们车子开走的时候，汤姆感到惊慌失措，心里像油煎一样。他的妻子和情妇，直到一小时前还是安安稳稳、不可侵犯的，现在却猛不防正从他的控制下溜走。本能促使他猛踩油门，以达到赶上黛西和把威尔逊抛在脑后的双重目的，于是我们以每小时五十英里的速度向阿斯托里亚飞驰而去。直到在高架铁路蜘蛛网似的钢架中间，我们才看见那辆逍遥自在的蓝色小轿车。

“五十号街附近那些大电影院很凉快，” 乔丹提议说，“我爱夏天下午的纽约，人都跑光了。有一种非常肉感的滋味——熟透了，仿佛各种奇异的果实都会落到你手

里。”

“肉感”这两个字使汤姆感到更加惶惶不安，但他还没来得及找话来表示反对，小轿车已经停了下来，黛西打着手势叫我们开上去并排停下。

“我们上哪儿去？”她喊道。

“去看电影怎样？”

“太热了，”她抱怨道，“你们去吧。我们去兜兜风，过会儿再和你们碰头。”她又勉强讲了两句俏皮话。“我们约好在另一个路口和你们碰头。我就是那个抽着两支香烟的男人。”

“我们不能待在这里争论，”汤姆不耐烦地说，这时我们后面有一辆卡车在拼命按喇叭。“你们跟我开到中央公园南边广场饭店前面。”

有好几次他掉过头去向后看，找他们的车子，如果路上的交通把他们耽误了，他就放慢速度，直到他们重新出现。我想他生怕他们会钻进一条小街，从此永远从他生活里消失。

可是他们并没有。而我们大家都采取了这个更难理解的步骤——在广场饭店租用了一间套房的客厅。

那场长时间的、吵吵嚷嚷的争论，以把我们都赶进那间屋子而告终的，我现在也弄不清是怎么回事了，虽然我清清楚楚记得，在这个过程中，我的内衣像一条湿漉漉的蛇一样顺着我的腿往上爬，同时一阵阵冷汗珠横流浹背。这个主意起源于黛西的建议，她要我们租五间浴室去洗冷水澡，后来才采取了“喝杯凉薄荷酒的地方”这个更明确的形式。我们每一个人都翻来覆去地说这是个“馊主意”——我们大家同

时开口跟一个为难的旅馆办事员讲话，自认为或者假装认为，我们这样很滑稽……

那间房子很大但是很闷，虽然已经是四点了，但打开窗户只不过从公园里的灌木丛刮来一股热风。黛西走到镜子前面，背朝我们站着，理她的头发。

“这个套间真高级，” 乔丹肃然起敬地低声说，引得大家都笑了起来。

“再打开一扇窗户，” 黛西命令道，连头也不回。

“没有窗户可开了。”

“那么我们顶好打电话要把斧头……”

“正确的办法是忘掉热，” 汤姆不耐烦地说，“像你这样唠唠叨叨只会热得十倍的难受。”

他打开毛巾拿出那瓶威士忌来放在桌上。

“何必找她的碴呢，老兄？” 盖茨比说，“是你自己要进城来的。”

沉默了一会。电话簿从钉子上滑开，啪的一声掉到地上，于是乔丹低声说：“对不起。” 但是这一次没人笑了。

“我去捡起来，” 我抢着说。

“我捡到了。” 盖茨比仔细看看断开的绳子，表示感兴趣地“哼”了一声，然后把电话簿往椅子上一扔。

“那是你得意的口头禅，是不是？” 汤姆尖锐地说。

“什么是？”

“张口闭口都是‘老兄’。你是从哪里学来的？”

“你听着，汤姆，”黛西说，一面从镜子前面掉转身来。“如果你打算进行人身攻击，我就一分钟都不待。打个电话叫点冰来作薄荷酒。”

汤姆一拿起话筒，那憋得紧紧的热气突然爆发出声音，这时我们听到门德尔松的《婚礼进行曲》惊心动魄的和弦从底下舞厅里传上来。

“这么热竟然还有人结婚！”乔丹很难受地喊道。

“尽管如此——我就是在六月中旬结婚的，”黛西回忆道，“六月的路易斯维尔！有一个人昏倒了。昏倒的是谁，汤姆？”

“毕洛克西，”他简慢地答道。

“一个姓‘毕洛克西’的人。‘木头人’毕洛克西，他是做盒子的——这是事实——他又是田纳西州毕洛克西市的人。”

“他们把他抬进我家里，”乔丹补充说，“因为我们住的地方离教堂只有两家。他一住就住了三个星期，直到爸爸叫他走路。他走后第二天爸爸就死了。”过了一会她又加了一句话说，“两件事并没有什么联系。”

“我从前也认识一个孟菲斯人叫比尔·毕洛克西，”我说。

“那是他堂兄弟。他走以前我对他的整个家史都一清二楚了。他送了我一根打高尔夫球的轻击棒，我到今天还在用。”

婚礼一开始音乐就停了，此刻从窗口又飘进来一阵很长的欢呼声，接着又是一阵阵“好啊——好——啊”的叫喊，最后响起爵士乐的声音，跳舞开始了。

“我们都衰老了，”黛西说，“如果我们还年轻的话，我们就会站起来跳舞的。”

“别忘了毕洛克西，”乔丹警告她。“你是在哪儿认识他的，汤姆？”

“毕洛克西？”他聚精会神想了一会。“我不认识他。他是黛西的朋友。”

“他才不是哩，”她否认道，“我在那以前从来没见过他。他是坐你的专车来的。”

“对啦，他说他认识你。他说他是在路易斯维尔长大的。阿莎·伯德在最后一分钟把他带来，问我们是否有地方让他坐。”

乔丹笑了一笑。

“他多半是不花钱搭车回家。他告诉我他在耶鲁是你们的班长。”

汤姆和我彼此茫然地对看。

“毕洛克西？”

“首先，我们压根儿没有班长……”

盖茨比的脚不耐烦地连敲了几声，引起汤姆突然瞧了他一眼。

“说起来，盖茨比先生，我听说你是牛津校友。”

“不完全是那样。”

“哦，是的，我听说你上过牛津。”

“是的，我上过那儿。”

停顿了一会。然后是汤姆的声音，带有怀疑和侮辱的口吻：

“你一定是在毕洛克西上纽黑文的时候去牛津的吧。”

又停顿了一会。一个茶房敲门，端着敲碎了的薄荷叶和冰走进来，但是他的一声“谢谢您”和轻轻的关门声也没打破沉默。这个关系重大的细节终于要澄清了。

“我跟你说过了我上过那儿，”盖茨比说。

“我听见了，可是我想知道在什么时候。”

“是一九一九年，我只待了五个月。这就是为什么我不能自称是牛津校友的原因。”

汤姆瞥了大家一眼，看看我们脸上是否也反映出他的怀疑。但是我们都在看着盖茨比。

“那是停战以后他们为一些军官提供的机会，”他继续说下去，“我们可以上任何英国或者法国的大学。”

我真想站起来拍拍他的肩膀。我又一次感到对他完全信任，这是我以前体验过的。

黛西站了起来，微微一笑，走到桌子前面。

“打开威士忌，汤姆，”她命令道，“我给你做一杯薄荷酒。然后你就不会觉得自己那么蠢了……你看这些薄荷叶子！”

“等一会，” 汤姆厉声道，“我还要问盖茨比先生一个问题。”

“请问吧，” 盖茨比很有礼貌地说。

“你到底想在我家里制造什么样的纠纷？”

他们终于公开化了，盖茨比倒也满意。

“他没制造纠纷，” 黛西惊惶地看看这一个又看看那一个。“你在制造纠纷。请你自制一点儿。”

“自制！” 汤姆不能置信地重复道，“我猜想最时髦的事情大概是装聋作哑，让不知从哪儿冒出来的阿猫阿狗跟你老婆调情。哼，如果那样才算时髦，你可以把我除外……这年头人们开始对家庭生活和家庭制度嗤之以鼻，再下一步他们就该抛弃一切，搞黑人和白人通婚了。”

他满口胡言乱语，脸涨得通红，俨然自以为单独一个人站在文明最后的壁垒上。

“我们这里大家都是白人嘛，” 乔丹咕哝着说。

“我知道我不得人心。我不举行大型宴会。大概你非得把自己的家搞成猪圈才能交朋友——在这个现代世界上。”

尽管我和大家一样感到很气愤，每次他一张口我就忍不住想笑。一个酒徒色鬼竟然摇身一变就成了道学先生。

“我也有话要对你说，老兄……” 盖茨比开始说。但是黛西猜到了他的意图。

“请你不要说！” 她无可奈何地打断了他的话。“咱们都回家吧。咱们都回家不好

吗？”

“这是个好主意。”我站了起来。“走吧，汤姆。没有人要喝酒。”

“我想知道盖茨比先生有什么话要告诉我。”

“你妻子不爱你，”盖茨比说，“她从来没有爱过你。她爱我。”

“你一定是疯了！”汤姆脱口而出喊道。

盖茨比猛地跳了起来，激动异常。

“她从来没有爱过你，你听见吗？”他喊道。“她跟你结了婚，只不过是因为我穷，她等我等得不耐烦了。那是一个大错，但是她心里除了我从来没有爱过任何人！”

这时乔丹和我都想走，但是汤姆和盖茨比争先恐后地阻拦，硬要我们留下，仿佛两人都没有什么不可告人的事，仿佛以共鸣的方式分享他们的感情也是一种特殊的荣幸。

“坐下，黛西，”汤姆竭力装出父辈的口吻，可是并不成功。“这是怎么回事？我要听听整个经过。”

“我已经告诉过你是怎么一回事了，”盖茨比说，“已经五年了——而你却不知道。”

汤姆霍地转向黛西。

“你五年来一直和这家伙见面？”

“没有见面，”盖茨比说，“不，我们见不了面。可是我们俩在那整个期间彼此相爱，老兄，而你却不知道。我以前有时发笑，”但是他眼中并无笑意。“想到你并不知道。”

“哦——原来不过如此。”汤姆像牧师一样把他的粗指头合拢在一起轻轻地敲敲，然后往椅子上一靠。

“你发疯了！”他破口大骂。“五年前发生的事我没法说，因为当时我还不认识黛西——可是我真他妈的想不通你怎么能沾到她的边，除非你是把食品杂货送到她家后门口的。至于你其余的话都是他妈的胡扯。黛西跟我结婚时她是爱我的，现在她还是爱我。”

“不对，”盖茨比摇摇头说。

“可是她确实爱我。问题是她有时胡思乱想，干一些她自己也莫名其妙的事。”他明智地点点头。“不但如此，我也爱黛西。偶尔我也荒唐一阵，干点蠢事，不过我总是回头，而且我心里始终是爱她的。”

“你真叫人恶心，”黛西说。她转身向着我，她的声音降低了一个音阶，使整个屋子充满了难堪的轻蔑。“你知道我们为什么离开芝加哥吗？我真奇怪人家没给你讲过那次小胡闹的故事。”

盖茨比走过来站在她身边。

“黛西，那一切都过去了，”他认真地说，“现在没什么关系了。就跟他说真话——你从来没爱过他——一切也就永远勾销了。”

她茫然地看着他。“是啊——我怎么会爱他——怎么可能呢？”

“你从来没有爱过他。”

她犹疑不定。她的眼光哀诉似地落在乔丹和我的身上，仿佛她终于认识到她正在干什么——仿佛她一直并没打算干任何事。但是现在事情已经干了，为时太晚了。

“我从来没爱过他，”她说，但看得出很勉强。

“在凯皮奥兰尼时也没爱过吗？”汤姆突然质问道。

“没有。”

从下面的舞厅里，低沉而闷人的乐声随着一阵阵热气飘了上来。

“那天我把你从‘甜酒钵’上抱下来，不让你鞋子沾湿，你也不爱我吗？”他沙哑的声音流露着柔情。“黛西？”

“请别说了。”她的声音是冷淡的，但是怨尤已从中消失。她看看盖茨比。“你瞧，杰。”她说，可是她要点支烟时手却在发抖。突然她把香烟和点着的火柴都扔到地毯上。

“啊，你要求的太过分了！”她对盖茨比喊道，“我现在爱你——难道这还不够吗？过去的事我没法挽回。”她无可奈何地抽抽噎噎哭了起来。“我一度爱过他——但是我也爱过你。”

盖茨比的眼睛张开来又闭上。

“你也爱过我？”他重复道。

“连这个都是瞎话，”汤姆恶狠狠地说。“她根本不知道你还活着。要知道，黛西

和我之间有许多事你永远也不会知道，我俩永远也不会忘记。”

他的话刺痛了盖茨比的心。

“我要跟黛西单独谈谈，”他执意说，“她现在太激动了……”

“单独谈我也不能说我从来没爱过汤姆，”她用伤心的声调吐露道，“那么说不会是真话。”

“当然不会是真话，”汤姆附和道。

她转身对着她丈夫。

“就好像你还在乎似的，”她说。

“当然在乎。从今以后我要更好地照顾你。”

“你还不明白，”盖茨比说，有点慌张了。“你没有机会再照顾她了。”

“我没有机会了？”汤姆睁大了眼睛，放声大笑。他现在大可以控制自己了。“什么道理呢？”

“黛西要离开你了。”

“胡说八道。”

“不过我确实要离开你，”她显然很费劲地说。

“她不会离开我的！”汤姆突然对盖茨比破口大骂。“反正决不会为了一个鸟骗子离开我，一个给她套在手指上的戒指也得去偷来的鸟骗子。”

“这么说我可不答应！”黛西喊道，“啊呀，咱们走吧。”

“你到底是什么人？”汤姆嚷了起来。“你是迈耶·沃尔夫山姆的那帮狐群狗党里的货色，这一点我碰巧知道。我对你的事儿做了一番小小的调查——明天我还要进一步调查。”

“那你尽可以自便，老兄，”盖茨比镇定地说。

“我打听了出来你那些‘药房’是什么名堂。”他转过身来对着我们很快地说，“他和这个姓沃尔夫山姆的家伙在本地和芝加哥买下了许多小街上的药房，私自把酒精卖给人家喝。那就是他变的许多小戏法中的一个。我头一趟看见他就猜出他是个私酒贩子，我猜的还差不离哩。”

“那又该怎么样呢？”盖茨比很有礼貌地说，“你的朋友瓦尔特·蔡斯和我们合伙并不觉得丢人嘛。”

“你们还把他坑了，是不是？你们让他在新泽西州坐了一个月监牢。天啊！你应当听听瓦尔特议论你的那些话。”

“他找上我们的时候是个穷光蛋。他很高兴赚几个钱，老兄。”

“你别叫我‘老兄’！”汤姆喊道。盖茨比没搭腔。“瓦尔特本来还可以告你违犯赌博法的，但是沃尔夫山姆吓得他闭上了嘴。”

那种不熟悉可是认得出的表情又在盖茨比的脸上出现了。

“那个开药房的事儿不过是小意思，”汤姆慢慢地接着说，“但是你们现在又在搞什么花样，瓦尔特不敢告诉我。”

我看了黛西一眼，她吓得目瞪口呆地看看盖茨比，又看看她丈夫，再看看乔丹——她已经开始在下巴上面让一件看不见可是引人入胜的东西保持平衡。然后我又回头去看盖茨比，——看到他的表情我大吃一惊。他看上去活像刚“杀了个人”似的——我说这话可与他花园里的那些流言蜚语毫不相干。可是一刹那间他脸上的表情恰恰可以用那种荒唐的方式来形容。

这种表情过去以后，他激动地对黛西说开了，矢口否认一切，又为了没有人提出的罪名替自己辩护。但是他说得越多，她就越显得疏远，结果他只好不说了，唯有那死去的梦随着下午的消逝在继续奋斗，拼命想接触那不再摸得着的东西，朝着屋子那边那个失去的声音痛苦地但并不绝望地挣扎着。

那个声音又央求要走。

“求求你，汤姆！我再也受不了啦。”

她惊惶的眼睛显示出来，不管她曾经有过什么意图，有过什么勇气，现在肯定都烟消云散了。

“你们两人动身回家，黛西，”汤姆说，“坐盖茨比先生的车子。”

她看着汤姆，大为惊恐，但他故作宽大以示侮蔑，定要她去。

“走吧。他不会麻烦你的。我想他明白他那狂妄的小小的调情已经完了。”

他们俩走掉了，一句话也没说，一转眼就消失了，变得无足轻重，孤零零的，像一对鬼影，甚至和我们的怜悯都隔绝了。

过了一会汤姆站了起来，开始用毛巾把那瓶没打开的威士忌包起来。

“来点儿这玩意吗？乔丹？.....尼克？”

我没搭腔。

“尼克？”他又问了一声。

“什么？”

“来点儿吗？”

“不要.....我刚才记起来今天是我的生日。”

我三十岁了。在我面前展现出一条新的十年的凶多吉少、咄咄逼人的道路。

等到我们跟他坐上小轿车动身回长岛时，已经是七点钟了。汤姆一路上话说个不停，得意洋洋，哈哈大笑，但他的声音对乔丹和我就好像人行道上嘈杂的人声和头顶上高架铁路轰隆隆的车声一样遥远。人类的同情心是有限度的，因此我们也乐于让他们那些可悲的争论和身后的城市灯火一道逐渐消失。三十岁——展望十年的孤寂，可交往的单身汉逐渐稀少，热烈的感情逐渐稀薄，头发逐渐稀疏。但我身边有乔丹，和黛西大不一样，她少年老成，不会把早已忘怀的梦一年又一年还藏在心里。我们驶过黝黑的铁桥时她苍白的脸懒懒地靠在我上衣的肩上，她紧紧握住我的手，驱散了三十岁生日的巨大冲击。

于是我们在稍微凉快一点的暮色中向死亡驶去。

那个年轻的希腊人米切里斯，在灰堆旁边开小咖啡馆的，是验尸时主要的见证。那个大热天他一觉睡到五点以后才起来，溜到车行去，发觉乔治·威尔逊在他的办公室里病了——真的病了，面色和他本人苍白的头发一样苍白，浑身都在发抖。米切里

斯劝他上床去睡觉，但威尔逊不肯，说那样就要错过不少生意。这位邻居正在劝说他的时候，楼上忽然大吵大闹起来。

“我把我老婆锁在上面，”威尔逊平静地解释说。“她要在那儿一直待到后天，然后我们就搬走。”

米切里斯大吃一惊；他们做了四年邻居，威尔逊从来不像是一个能说出这种话来的人。通常他总是一个筋疲力尽的人：不干活的时候，他就坐在门口一把椅子上，呆呆地望着路上过往的人和车辆。不管谁跟他说话，他总是和和气气、无精打采地笑笑。他听他老婆支使，自己没有一点主张。

因此，米切里斯很自然地想了解发生了什么事，但威尔逊一个字也不肯说——相反地，他却用古怪的、怀疑的目光端详起这位客人来，并且盘问他某些日子某些时间他在干什么。正在米切里斯逐渐感到不自在的时候，有几个工人从门口经过，朝他的餐馆走去，他就乘机脱身，打算过一会再回来。但是他并没有再来。他想他大概忘了，并没别的原因。七点过一点他再到外面来，才想起了这番谈话，因为他听见威尔逊太太的声音破口大骂，就在楼下车行里。

“你打我！”他听见她嚷嚷。“让你推，让你打吧，你这个肮脏没种的鸟东西！”

过了一会她就冲出门来在黄昏中奔去，一面挥手一面叫喊——他还没来得及离开自己的门口，事情就已经发生了。

那辆“凶车”——这是报纸上的提法——停都没停；车子从苍茫暮色中出现，出事后悲惨地犹疑了片刻，然后在前面一转弯就不见了。马弗罗·米切里斯连车子的颜色都说不准——他告诉第一个警察说是浅绿色。另一辆车，开往纽约的那一辆，开到一百码以外停了下来，开车的赶快跑回出事地点，莱特尔·威尔逊在那里跪在公路当

中，死于非命，她那发黑的浓血和尘土混合在一起。

米切里斯和这个人最先赶到她身旁，但等他们把她汗湿的衬衣撕开时，他们看见她左边的乳房已经松松地耷拉着，因此也不用再去听那下面的心脏了。她的嘴大张着，嘴角撕破了一点，仿佛她在放出储存了一辈子的无比旺盛的精力的时候噎了一下。

我们离那儿还有一段距离就看见三四辆汽车和一大群人。

“撞车！”汤姆道，“那很好。威尔逊终于有一点生意了。”

他把车子放慢下来，但并没打算停，直到我们开得近一点，车行门口那群人屏息敛容的面孔才使他不由自主地把车刹住。

“我们去看一眼，”他犹疑不定地说，“看一眼就走。”

我这时听见一阵阵空洞哀号的声音从车行里传出来，我们下了小轿车走向车行门口时，才听出其中翻来覆去、上气不接下气地喊着“我的上帝啊！”几个字。

“这儿出了什么大乱了，”汤姆激动地说。

他踮着脚从一圈人头上向车行里望去，车行天花板上点着一盏挂在铁丝罩里的发黄光的电灯。他喉咙里哼了一声，接着他用两只有力气的手臂猛然向前一推就挤进了人群。

那一圈人又合拢来，同时传出一阵咕咕哝哝的劝告声；有一两分钟我什么也看不见。后来新到的人又打乱了圈子，忽然间乔丹和我被挤到里面去了。

茉特尔·威尔逊的尸体裹在一条毯子里，外面又包了一条毯子，仿佛在这炎热的夜晚

她还怕冷似的。尸体放在墙边一张工作台上，汤姆背对着我们正低头在看，一动也不动。在他旁边站着一名摩托车警察，他正在把人名往小本子上抄，一面流汗一面写了又涂改。起初我找不到那些在空空的车行里回荡的高昂的呻吟声的来源——然后我才看见威尔逊站在他办公室高高的门槛上，身体前后摆动着，双手抓着门框。有一个人在低声跟他说话，不时想把一只手放在他肩上，但威尔逊既听不到也看不见。他的目光从那盏摇晃的电灯慢慢地下移到墙边那张停着尸体的桌子上，然后又突然转回到那盏灯上，同时他不停地发出他那高亢的、可怕的呼号：

“哎哟，我的上……帝啊！哎哟，我的上……帝啊！哎哟，上……帝啊！哎哟，我的上……帝啊！”

过了一会汤姆猛地一甩，抬起头来，用呆滞的目光扫视了车行，然后对警察含糊不清地说了一句话。

“M—a—v—” 警察在说，“—o—”

“不对，r—” 那人更正说，“M—a—v—r—o—”

“你听我说！” 汤姆凶狠地低声说。

“r—” 警察说，“o—”

“g—”

“g—” 汤姆的大手猛一下落在他肩膀上时，他抬起头来。“你要啥，伙计？”

“是怎么回事？——我要知道的就是这个。”

“汽车撞了她，当场撞死。”

“当场撞死，” 汤姆重复道，两眼发直。

“她跑到了路中间。狗娘养的连车子都没停。”

“当时有两辆车子，” 米切里斯说，“一来，一去，明白吗？”

“去哪儿？” 警察机警地问。

“一辆车去一个方向。喏，她，” 他的手朝着毯子举起来，但半路上就打住，又放回到身边。“她跑到外面路上，纽约来的那辆车迎面撞上了她，车子时速有三四十英里。”

“这地方叫什么名字？” 警察问道。

“没有名字。”

一个面色灰白、穿得很体面的黑人走上前来。

“那是一辆黄色的车子，” 他说，“大型的黄色汽车，新的。”

“看到事故发生的吗？” 警察问。

“没有，但是那辆车子在路上从我旁边开过，速度不止四十英里，有五六十英里。”

“过来，让我们把你名字记下来。让开点。我要记下他的名字。”

这段对话一定有几个字传到了在办公室门口摇晃的威尔逊耳朵里，因为忽然间一个新的题目出现在他的哀号中：

“你不用告诉我那是一辆什么样的车！我知道那是辆什么样的车！”

我注视着汤姆，看见他肩膀后面那团肌肉在上衣下面紧张起来。他急忙朝威尔逊走过去，然后站在他面前，一把抓住他的上臂。

“你一定得镇定下来，”他说，粗犷的声音中带着安慰。

威尔逊的眼光落到了汤姆身上；他先是一惊，踮起了脚尖，然后差点跪倒在地上，要不是汤姆扶住他的话。

“你听我说，”汤姆说，一面轻轻地摇摇他。“我刚才到这里，从纽约来的。我是把我们谈过的那辆小轿车给你送来的。今天下午我开的那辆车子不是我的——你听见了吗？后来我整个下午都没看到它。”

只有那个黑人和我靠得近，可以听到他讲的话；但那个警察也听出他声调里有问题，于是用严厉的目光向这边看。

“你说些什么？”他质问。

“我是他的朋友。”汤姆回过头来，但两手还紧紧抓住威尔逊的身体。“他说他认识肇事的车子……是一辆黄色的车子。”

一点模糊的冲动促使警察疑心地看看汤姆。

“那么你的车是什么颜色呢？”

“是一辆蓝色的车子，一辆小轿车。”

“我们刚从纽约来的，”我说。

有一个一直在我们后面不远开车的人证实了这一点，于是警察就掉过头去了。

“好吧，请你让我再把那名字正确地……”

汤姆把威尔逊像玩偶一样提起来，提到办公室里去，放在一把椅子上，然后自己又回来。

“来个人到这儿陪他坐着。”他用发号施令的口吻说。他张望着，这时站得最近的两个人彼此望望，勉强地走进那间屋子。然后汤姆在他们身后关上了门，跨下那一级台阶，他的眼睛躲开那张桌子。他经过我身边时低声道：“咱们走吧。”

他不自在地用那双权威性的胳膊开路，我们从仍然在聚集的人群中推出去，遇到一位匆匆而来的医生，手里拎着皮包，还是半个钟头以前抱着一线希望去请的。

汤姆开得很慢，直到拐过那个弯之后他的脚才使劲踩下去，于是小轿车就在黑夜里飞驰而去。过了一会我听见低低的一声呜咽，接着看到他泪流满面。

“没种的狗东西！”他呜咽地说，“他连车子都没停。”布坎农家的房子忽然在黑黝黝、瑟瑟作响的树木中间浮现在我们面前。汤姆在门廊旁边停下，抬头望望二楼，那里有两扇窗户在蔓藤中间给灯光照得亮堂堂的。

“黛西到家了，”他说。我们下车时，他看了我一眼，又微微皱皱眉头。

“我应当在西卵让你下车的，尼克。今晚我们没有什么事可做了。”

他身上起了变化，他说话很严肃，而且很果断。当我们穿过满地月光的石子道走向门廊时，他三言两语很利索地处理了眼前的情况。

“我去打个电话叫一辆出租汽车送你回家。你等车的时候，你和乔丹最好到厨房

去，让他们给你们做点晚饭——要是你们想吃的话。”他推开了大门。“进来吧。”

“不啦，谢谢。可是要麻烦你替我叫出租汽车。我在外面等。”

乔丹把她的手放在我胳膊上。

“你进来不好吗，尼克？”

“不啦，谢谢。”

我心里觉得有点不好受，我想一个人单独待着。但乔丹还流连了一下。

“现在才九点半，”她说。

说什么我也不肯进去了；他们几个人我这一天全都看够了，忽然间那也包括乔丹在内。她一定在我的表情中多少看出了一点苗头，因为她猛地掉转身，跑上门廊的台阶走进屋子里去了。我两手抱着头坐了几分钟，直到我听见屋子里有人打电话，又听见男管家的声音在叫出租汽车。随后我就沿着汽车道慢慢从房子面前走开，准备到大门口去等。

我还没走上二十码就听见有人叫我的名字，跟着盖茨比从两个灌木丛中间出来走到小路上。我当时一定已经神志恍惚了，因为我脑子里什么都想不到，除了他那套粉红色衣服在月光下闪闪发光。

“你在干什么？”我问道。

“就在这儿站着，老兄。”

不知为什么，这好像是一种可耻的行径。说不定他准备马上就去抢劫这个人家里；我也不会感到奇怪的，如果我看到许多邪恶的面孔，“沃尔夫山姆的人”的面孔，躲在他后面黑黝黝的灌木丛中。

“你在路上看见出什么事了吗？”他过了一会问道。

“看见的。”

他迟疑了一下。

“她撞死了吗？”

“死了。”

“我当时就料到了；我告诉了黛西我想是撞死了。一下子大惊一场，倒还好些。她表现得挺坚强。”

他这样说，仿佛黛西的反应是唯一要紧的事情。

“我从一条小路开回西卵去，”他接着说，“把车子停在我的车房里，我想没有人看到过我们，但我当然不能肯定。”

到这时我已经十分厌恶他，因此我觉得没有必要告诉他他想错了。

“那个女人是谁？”他问道。

“她姓威尔逊。她丈夫是那个车行的老板。这事到底怎么会发生的？”

“呃，我想把驾驶盘扳过来的……”他突然打住，我也忽然猜到了真相。

“是黛西在开车吗？”

“是的，”他过了一会才说，“但是当然我要说是我在开。是这样的，我们离开纽约的时候，她神经非常紧张，她以为开开车子可以使她镇定下来——后来这个女人向我们冲了出来；正好我们迎面来了一辆车子和我们相错。前后不到一分钟的事，但我觉得她想跟我们说话，以为我们是她认识的人。呃，黛西先是把车子从那个女人那边转向那辆车子，接着她惊慌失措又转了回去。我的手一碰到驾驶盘我就感到了震动——她一定是当场撞死的。”

“把她撞开了花……”

“别跟我说，老兄。”他闪缩了一下。“总而言之，黛西拼命踩油门。我要她停下来，但她停不了，我只得拉上了紧急刹车。这时她晕倒在我膝盖上，我就接过来向前开。”

“明天她就会好的，”他过了一会又说。“我只是在这儿等等，看他会不会因为今天下午那场争执找她麻烦。她把自己锁在自己屋子里了，假如他有什么野蛮的举动，她就会把灯关掉然后再打开。”

“他不会碰她的，”我说，“他现在想的不是她。”

“我不信任他，老兄。”

“你准备等多久？”

“整整一夜，如果有必要的话。至少，等到他们都去睡觉。”

我忽然有了一个新的看法。假定汤姆知道了开车的是黛西，他或许会认为事出有因

——他或许什么都会疑心。我看看那座房子；楼下有两三扇亮堂堂的窗户，还有二楼黛西屋子里映出的粉红色亮光。

“你在这儿等着，”我说，“我去看看有没有吵闹的迹象。”

我沿着草坪的边缘走了回去，轻轻跨过石子车道，然后踮起脚尖走上游廊的台阶。客厅的窗帘是拉开的，因此我看到屋子里是空的。我穿过我们三个月以前那个六月的晚上吃过晚餐的阳台，来到一小片长方形的灯光前面，我猜那是食品间的窗户。遮帘拉了下来，但我在窗台上找到了一个缝隙。

黛西和汤姆面对面坐在厨房的桌子两边，两人中间放着一盘冷的炸鸡，还有两瓶啤酒。他正在隔着桌子聚精会神地跟她说话，说得那么热切，他用手盖住了她的手。她不时抬起头来看看他，并且点头表示同意。

他们并不是快乐的，两人都没动鸡和啤酒——然而他们也不是不快乐的。这幅图画清清楚楚有一种很自然的亲密气氛，任何人也都会说他们俩在一同阴谋策划。

当我踮着脚尖走下阳台时，我听见我的出租汽车慢慢地沿着黑暗的道路向房子开过来。盖茨比还在车道上我刚才和他分手的地方等着。

“那上面一切都安静吗？”他焦急地问。

“是的，一切都安静。”我犹疑了一下。“你最好也回家去睡觉吧。”

他摇了摇头。

“我要在这儿一直等到黛西上床睡觉。晚安，老兄。”

他把两手插在上衣口袋里，热切地掉转身去端详那座房子，仿佛我的在场有损于他

神圣的守望。于是我走开了，留下他站在月光里——空守着。

第八章

我整夜不能入睡；一个雾笛在海湾上不停地呜呜响，我好像生病一样在狰狞的现实与可怕的噩梦之间辗转反侧。天快亮的时候我听见一辆出租汽车开上盖茨比的汽车道，我马上跳下床开始穿衣服——我觉得我有话要跟他说，有事要警告他，而早晨会太迟了。

我穿过他的草坪，看见他的大门还开着，他在门厅里靠着一张桌子站着，由于沮丧或者瞌睡而显得很颓唐。

“什么事也没发生，”他惨淡地说，“我等了，四点钟左右她走到窗口，站了一会儿，然后把灯关掉。”

那天夜里我们俩穿过那些大房间找香烟的时候，他的别墅在我的眼里显得特别巨大。我们推开帐篷布似的厚门帘，又沿着无尽头的黑暗墙壁瞎摸寻找电灯开关——有一次我轰隆一声摔在一架幽灵似的钢琴的键盘上。到处都是多得莫名其妙的灰尘，所有的屋子都是霉烘烘的，好像有很多日子没通过气似的。我在一张不熟悉的桌子上找到了烟盒子，里面还有两根走了味的、干瘪的纸烟。我们把客厅的落地窗打开，坐下来对着外面的黑夜抽烟。

“你应当走开，”我说，“他们会追查你的车子，这是肯定的。”

“现在走开，老兄？”

“到大西洋城去待一个星期，或是往北到蒙特利尔去。”

他不肯考虑。他绝不可能离开黛西，除非他知道她准备怎么办。他在抓着最后一线希望不放，我也不忍叫他撒手。

就是这天夜里，他把他跟丹·科迪度过的年轻时代的离奇故事告诉了我，因为“杰伊·盖茨比”已经像玻璃一样在汤姆的铁硬的恶意上碰得粉碎，那出漫长的秘密狂想剧也演完了。我想他这时什么都可以毫无保留地承认，但他只想谈黛西的事。

她是他所认识的第一个“大家闺秀”。他以前以各种未透露的身份也曾和这一类人接触过，但每次总有一层无形的铁丝网隔在中间。他为她神魂颠倒。他到她家里去，起先和泰勒营的其他军官一起去，后来单独前往。她的家使他惊异——他从来没进过这样美丽的住宅。但是其所以有一种扣人心弦的强烈的情调却是因为她住在那里——这房子对于她就像他在军营里的帐篷对于他一样的平淡无奇。这房子充满了引人入胜的神秘气氛，仿佛暗示楼上有许多比其他卧室都美丽而凉爽的卧室，走廊里到处都是赏心乐事，还有许多风流艳史——不是霉烘烘、用熏香草保存起来的，而是活生生的，使人联想到今年的雪亮的汽车，联想到鲜花还没凋谢的舞会。很多男人曾经爱过黛西，这也使他激动——这在他眼中抬高了她的身价。他感到她家里到处都有他们的存在；空气中弥漫着仍然颤动的感情的阴影和回声。

但是，他明白他之所以能出入黛西家里纯粹是出于偶然。不管他作为杰伊·盖茨比会有何等的锦绣前程，目前他只是一个默默无闻、一文不名的青年人，而且他的军服——这件看不见的外衣随时都可能从他肩上滑落下来。因此他尽量利用他的时间。他占有了他所能得到的东西，狼吞虎咽，肆无忌惮——终于在一个静寂的十月的夜晚他占有了黛西，占有了她，正因为他并没有真正的权利去摸她的手。

他也许应该鄙视自己的，因为他确实用欺骗的手段占有了她。我不是说他利用了他那虚幻的百万家财，但是他有意给黛西造成一种安全感；让她相信他的出身跟她不

相上下——相信他完全能够照料她。实际上，他并没有这种能力——他背后没有生活优裕的家庭撑腰，而且只要全无人情味的政府一声令下，他随时都可以被调到世界上任何地方去。

但是他并没有鄙视自己，事情的结果也出乎他的意料。他起初很可能打算及时行乐，然后一走了之——但是现在他发现他已经把自己献身于追求一种理想。他知道黛西不同寻常，但是他并没认识到一位“大家闺秀”究竟有多少不同寻常。她回到她那豪华的住宅里，回到她那丰富美满的生活，突然不见了，给盖茨比什么也没留下。他觉得他已经和她结了婚了，如此而已。

两天之后，他们俩再见面时，显得心慌意乱，似乎上当受骗的倒是盖茨比。她家凉台沐浴在灿烂的星光里；她转身让他吻她那张奇妙、可爱的嘴时，时髦的长靠椅的柳条吱吱作响。她着了凉，她的声音比平时更沙哑，更动人；盖茨比深切地体会到财富怎样禁锢和保存青春与神秘，体会到一套套衣装怎样使人保持清新，体会到黛西像白银一样皎皎发光，安然高踞于穷苦人激烈的生存斗争之上。

“我真没法向你形容我发现自己爱上了她以后感到多么惊讶，老兄。有一阵我甚至希望她把我甩掉，但她没有，因为她也爱我。她认为我懂很多事，因为我懂的和她懂的不一样……唉，我就是那样，把雄心壮志撇在一边，每一分钟都在情网里越陷越深，而且忽然之间我也什么都不在乎了。如果我能够告诉她我打算去做些什么而从中得到更大的快乐，那么又何必去做大事呢？”

在他动身到海外之前的最后一个下午，他搂着黛西默默地坐了很长的时间。那是一个寒冷的秋日，屋子里生了火，她的两颊烘得通红。她不时移动一下，他也微微挪动一下胳膊，有一次他还吻吻她那乌黑光亮的头发。下午已经使他们平静了一会，仿佛为了在他们记忆中留下一个深刻的印象，为第二天即将开始的长远的分离做好

准备。她用无言的嘴唇拂过他上衣的肩头，或者他温柔地碰一碰她的指尖，仿佛她是在睡梦之中，他俩在这一月的相爱中从来没有像这样亲密过，也从来没有像这样深刻地互通衷曲。

他在战争中一帆风顺。还没上前线他就当到上尉，阿贡战役之后他就晋升少校，当上了师机枪连的连长。停战以后他急得发疯地要求回国，但是由于混乱或者误会，他却被送到了牛津。他现在烦恼了——因为黛西的信里流露出紧张的绝望情绪。她不明白他为什么不能回来。她开始感觉到外界的压力，因此她需要见他，需要感到有他在她身边，需要他安慰她，说她所做的是完全正确。

毕竟黛西还年轻，并且她那人为的世界充满了兰花、愉快的势利风尚和乐队——是那些乐队定当年的节奏，用新的曲调总结人生的哀愁和温情。萨克斯管通宵呜咽着《比尔街爵士乐》绝望的哀吟，同时一百双金银舞鞋扬起闪亮的灰尘。每天晚茶时分，总有一些房间由于这种低而甜的狂热而不停地震颤，同时鲜亮的面庞飘来飘去，好像是被哀怨的喇叭吹落在舞池里的玫瑰花瓣。

在这个朦胧的宇宙里，黛西随着社交忙季又开始活跃了；忽然间她又重新每天和五六个男人订五六次约会，到破晓才困顿不堪地入睡，夜礼服的珠子和薄绸同凋零的兰花缠在一起，丢在她床边的地板上。在这整个期间她内心深处渴望作出一个决定。她现在就要解决自己的终身大事，刻不容缓——而且这个决定必须由一股近在眼前的力量来作出——爱情啦、金钱啦、实实在在的东西。

那股力量在春天过了一半的时候，随着汤姆·布坎农的到来而出现了。他的身材和身价都很有分量，因此黛西也觉得很光彩。毫无疑问，有过一番思想斗争，后来也如释重负。盖茨比收到信时还在牛津。

这时长岛上已是黎明，我们走过去把楼下其余的窗子也都打开，让屋子里充满渐渐灰白、渐渐金黄的光线。一棵树的影子突然横投在露水上，同时幽灵般的鸟儿在蓝色的树叶中开始歌唱。空气中有一种慢慢的愉快的动静，还谈不上是风，预示着凉爽宜人的天气。

“我相信她从来没爱过他，”盖茨比从一扇窗前转过身来，用挑战的神气看着我。“你一定得记住，老兄，她今天下午非常紧张。他跟她讲那些话的方式把她吓唬住了——他把我说成是一个一文不值的骗子。结果她几乎不知道自己在说些什么。”

他闷闷不乐地坐了下来。

“当然她可能爱过他一会儿，在他们刚结婚的时候——就在那时也更加爱我，你明白吗？”

忽然间他说出了一句很奇怪的话。

“无论如何，”他说，“这只是个人的事。”

你怎么理解这句话呢，除非猜测在他对这件事的看法中有一种无法估量的强烈感情？

他从法国回来后，汤姆和黛西还在作结婚旅行，他痛苦不堪而又身不由主地用他军饷所余的最后的钱到路易斯维尔去了一趟。他在那里待了一个星期，走遍当年他俩在十一月的夜晚并肩散步的街道，又重访他俩当年开着她那辆白色汽车去过的那些偏僻地方。正如黛西家的房子在他看来一向比别的房子更加神秘和欢乐，现在路易斯维尔这个城市本身，虽然她已一去不回，在他看来还是弥漫着一种忧郁的美。

他离开的时候觉得，假使他更努力地去找的话，他也许可以找到她的——而现在他却留下她走了。三等车里很热——他现在一文不剩了。他走到敞篷的通廊，在一张折叠椅上坐下，接着车站溜了过去，一幢幢陌生的建筑物的背面移动过去。然后驶过春天的田野，一辆黄色电车在那里并排飞驰了一会工夫，电车上可能有人一度无意间在街头看见过她那张迷人的脸庞。

铁轨拐了一个弯，现在是背着太阳走，西沉的太阳光芒四射，似乎为这个慢慢消逝的、她曾生活过的城市祝福。他绝望地伸出手去，仿佛只想抓住一缕轻烟，从那个因为她而使他认为是最可爱的地方留下一个碎片。但是在他模糊的泪眼前面一切都跑得太快了，他知道他已经失去了其中的那一部分，最新鲜最美好的部分永远失去了。

我们吃完早饭走到外面阳台上去时已经九点钟了。一夜之间天气骤然变了，空气中已经有秋意。园丁，盖茨比的老用人中的最后一名，来到台阶前面。

“我今天准备把游泳池的水放掉，盖茨比先生。树叶很快就要开始落了，那样水管子就一定会堵塞。”

“今天不要搞，”盖茨比回答。他含有歉意地转身对着我。“你知道吗，老兄，我整个夏天从来没用过那个游泳池！”

我看了看我的表，站起身来。

“离我那班车还有十二分钟。”

我并不愿意进城去。我也没有精神干一点像样的工作，可是不仅如此——我不愿意离开盖茨比。我误了那班车，又误了下一班，然后才勉强离开。

“我给你打电话吧，” 我最后说。

“一定，老兄。”

“我中午前后给你打电话。”

我们慢慢地走下了台阶。

“我想黛西也会打电话来的。” 他神色不安地看着我，仿佛他希望我证实他的话。

“我猜想她会。”

“那么，再见吧。”

我们握握手，然后我就走开。在我快走到树篱之前，我想起了一件事，于是又掉转身来。

“他们是一帮混蛋，” 我隔着草坪喊道，“他们那一大帮子都放在一堆还比不上你。”

我后来一直很高兴我说了那句话。那是我对他说过的唯一的好话，因为我是彻头彻尾不赞成他的。他起先有礼貌地点点头，随后他脸上露出了那种喜洋洋的、会心的微笑，仿佛我们俩在这件事上早已进行了欢狂的勾结。他那套华丽的粉红色衣服衬托在白色的台阶上构成一片鲜艳的色彩，于是我联想起三个月前我初次来他的古色古香的别墅的那个晚上。当时他的草坪和汽车道上挤满了那些猜测他的罪愆的人们的面孔——而他站在台阶上，藏起他那永不腐蚀的梦，向他们挥手告别。

我感谢了他的殷勤招待。我们总是为这向他道谢——我和其他的人。

“再见，”我喊道。“谢谢你的早饭，盖茨比。”

到了城里，我勉强抄了一会那些不计其数的股票行情，后来就在我的转椅里睡着了。中午前不久电话把我吵醒，我吃了一惊，脑门上汗珠直冒。是乔丹·贝克；她时常在这个钟点打电话给我，因为她出入大饭店、俱乐部和私人住宅，行踪不定，我很难用任何其他办法找到她。通常她的声音从电话上传来总是清凉悦耳，仿佛一块草根土从一片碧绿的高尔夫球场上飘进了办公室的窗口，但是今天上午她的声音却显得生硬枯燥。

“我离开了黛西的家，”她说，“我此刻在海普斯特德，今天下午就要到索斯安普敦去。”

她离开黛西的家可能是很得体的，但是她的做法却使我不高兴，接着她下面一句话更叫我生气。

“昨晚你对我不怎么好。”

“在那种情况下有什么关系呢？”

片刻的沉默。然后：

“不管怎样吧.....我想见你。”

“我也想见你。”

“那么我就不去索斯安普敦，下午进城来，好不好？”

“不好.....我想今天下午不行。”

“随你的便吧。”

“今天下午实在不可能。许多……”

我们就这样说了一会，后来突然间我们俩都不再讲话了。我不知道我们俩是谁把电话啪地一下挂掉，但我知道我毫不在乎了。我那天不可能跟她在茶桌上面对面聊天，即使她从此永远不跟我讲话也不行。

几分钟以后我打电话到盖茨比家去，但线给占了。我一连打了四次，最后，一个不耐烦的接线员告诉我这条线路在专等底特律的长途电话。我拿出火车时刻表来，在三点五十分那班车上画了个小圆圈。然后我靠在椅子上，想思考一下。这时才是中午。

那天早上乘火车路过灰堆时，我特意走到车厢的另外一边去。我料想那儿整天都会有一群好奇的人围观，小男孩们在尘土中寻找黑色的血斑，还有一个爱唠叨的人翻来覆去讲出事的经过，一直说到连他自己也觉得越来越不真实，他也讲不下去了，茉特尔·威尔逊的悲惨的结局也被人遗忘。现在我要倒回去讲一下前一晚我们离开车行之后那里发生的情况。

他们好不容易才找到了她的妹妹凯瑟琳。她那天晚上一定是破了她自己不喝酒的规矩，因为她到达的时候已经喝得昏头昏脑的，无法理解救护车已经开到弗勒兴区去了。等他们使她明白了这一点，她马上就晕了过去，仿佛这是整个事件中最难以忍受的部分。有个人，或是好心或是好奇，让她上了他的车子，跟在她姐姐的遗体后面一路开过去。

直到午夜过去很久以后，还有川流不息的人拥在车行前面，同时乔治·威尔逊在里面长沙发上不停地摇来晃去。起先办公室的门是开着的，凡是到车行里面来的人都忍

不住往里面张望。后来有人说这太不像话了，才把门关上。米切里斯和另外几个男人轮流陪着他；起先有四五个人，后来剩下两三个人。再到后来，米切里斯不得不要求最后一个陌生人再等十五分钟，让他回自己铺子里去煮了一壶咖啡。在那以后，他单独一个人待在那儿陪着威尔逊一直到天亮。

三点钟左右，威尔逊哼哼唧唧的胡言乱语起了质变——他渐渐安静了下来，开始谈到那辆黄色的车子。他宣布他有办法去查出来这辆黄车子是谁的，然后他又脱口说出两个月以前他老婆有一次从城里回来时鼻青脸肿。

但等他听到自己说出这事，他畏缩了一下，又开始哭哭啼啼地叫喊“我的上帝啊！”米切里斯笨口拙舌地想法子分散他的注意力。

“你结婚多久了，乔治？得啦，安安静静坐一会儿，回答我的问题。你结婚多久了？”

“十二年。”

“生过孩子没有？得啦，乔治，坐着别动——我问了你一个问题。你生过孩子没有？”

硬壳的棕色甲虫不停地往暗淡的电灯上乱撞。每次米切里斯听见一辆汽车在外面公路上急驰而过，他总觉得听上去就像是几个小时以前那辆没停的车。他不愿意走进汽车间去，因为那张停放过尸体的工作台上有血迹；他只好很不舒服地在办公室里走来走去，——还没到天亮他已经熟悉里面的每样东西了——不时地又坐在威尔逊身边想法让他安静一点。

“有没有一个你有时去上的教堂，乔治？也许你已经好久没去过的？也许我可以打

电话给教堂，请一位牧师来，他可以跟你谈谈，不好吗？”

“不属于任何教堂。”

“你应当有一个教堂，乔治，碰到这种时候就有用了。你从前一定做过礼拜的。难道你不是在教堂里结婚的吗？听着，乔治，你听我说。难道你不是在教堂里结婚的吗？”

“那是很久以前了。”

回答问题的努力打断了他来回摇摆的节奏——他安静了一会。然后和原先一样的那种半清醒半迷糊的表情又回到了他无神的眼睛里。

“打开那个抽屉看看，”他指着书桌说。

“哪一个抽屉？”

“那个抽屉——那一个。”

米切里斯打开了离他手边最近的那个抽屉。里面什么都没有，除了一根小小的贵重的狗皮带，是用牛皮和银绶制作的。看上去还是新的。

“这个？”他举起狗皮带问道。

威尔逊瞪着眼点点头。

“我昨天下午发现的。她想法子向我说明它的来由，但是我知道这件事蹊跷。”

“你是说你太太买的吗？”

“她用薄纸包着放在她的梳妆台上。”

米切里斯看不出这有什么古怪，于是他对威尔逊说出十来个理由为什么他老婆可能会买这条狗皮带。但是不难想象，这些同样的理由有一些威尔逊已经从茉特尔那里听过，因为他又轻轻地哼起“我的上帝啊！”——他的安慰者还有几个理由没说出口又缩回去了。

“那么他杀害了她，”威尔逊说，他的嘴巴突然张得大大的。

“谁杀害了她？”

“我有办法打听出来。”

“你胡思乱想，乔治，”他的朋友说，“你受了很大的刺激，连自己说什么都不知道了。你还是尽量安安静静地坐到天亮吧。”

“他谋杀了她。”

“那是交通事故，乔治。”

威尔逊摇了摇头。他眼睛眯成一条缝，嘴巴微微咧开，不以为然地轻轻“哼”了一声。

“我知道，”他肯定地说，“我是个信任别人的人，从来也不怀疑任何人有鬼，但是我一旦弄明白一件事，我心里就有数了。是那辆车子里的那个男人。她跑过去想跟他说话，但是他不肯停下来。”

米切里斯当时也看到这个情况了。但他并没想到其中有什么特殊的意义。他以为威尔逊太太是从她丈夫那里跑开，而并不是想拦住某一辆汽车。

“她怎么可能弄成那样呢？”

“她这人很深沉，” 威尔逊说，仿佛这就回答了问题。 “啊——哟——哟——”

他又摇晃起来，米切里斯站在旁边搓着手里的狗皮带。

“也许你有什么朋友我可以打电话请来帮帮忙吧，乔治？”

这是一个渺茫的希望——他几乎可以肯定威尔逊一个朋友也没有；他连个老婆都照顾不了。又过了一会他很高兴看到屋子里起了变化，窗外渐渐发蓝，他知道天快亮了。五点左右，外面天色更蓝，屋子里灯可以关掉了。

威尔逊呆滞的眼睛转向外面的灰堆，那上面小朵的灰云呈现出离奇古怪的形状，在黎明的微风中飞来飞去。

“我跟她谈了，” 他沉默了半天以后喃喃地说，“我告诉她，她也许可以骗我，但她决骗不了上帝。我把她领到窗口，” 他费劲地站了起来，走到后窗户面前，把脸紧贴在上面。“然后我说：‘上帝知道你所做的事，你所做的一切事。你可以骗我，但你骗不了上帝！’”

米切里斯站在他背后，吃惊地看到他正盯着T·J·埃克尔堡大夫的眼睛，黯淡无光，巨大无比，刚刚从消散的夜色中显现出来。

“上帝看见一切，” 威尔逊又说了一遍。

“那是一幅广告，” 米切里斯告诉他。不知是什么使他从窗口转开，回头向室内看。但是威尔逊在那里站了很久，脸紧靠着玻璃窗，向着曙光不住地点头。

等到六点钟，米切里斯已经筋疲力尽，因此听到有一辆车子在外面停下的声音时满

心感激。来的也是昨天帮着守夜的一位，答应了要回来的，于是他做了三个人的早饭，他和那个人一同吃了。威尔逊现在比较安静，米切里斯就回家睡觉；四小时之后他醒过来，急忙又跑回车行，威尔逊已经不见了。

他的行踪——他一直是步行的——事后查明是先到罗斯福港，从那里又到盖德山，他在那里买了一块三明治，可是并没吃，还买了一杯咖啡。他一定很累，走得很慢，因为他中午才走到盖德山。一直到这里为他的时间作出交代并不难——有几个男孩子看到过一个“疯疯癫癫”的男人，还有几个路上开汽车的人记得他从路边上古里古怪地盯着他们。以后三小时他就无影无踪了。警察根据他对米切里斯说的话，说他“有办法查出来”，猜想他用那段时间在那带地方走遍各家车行，打听一辆黄色的汽车。可是始终并没有一个见过他的汽车行的人站出来说话，所以他或许有更容易、更可靠的办法去打听他所要知道的事情。到下午两点半钟，他到了西卵，在那里他问人到盖茨比家去的路。所以那时候他已经知道盖茨比的名字了。

下午两点钟盖茨比穿上游泳衣，留了话给男管家，如果有人打电话来，就到游泳池来给他送个信。他先到汽车房去拿了一个夏天供客人们娱乐用的橡皮垫子，司机帮他打足了气。然后他吩咐司机在任何情况下不得把那辆敞篷车开出来——而这是很奇怪的，因为前面右边的挡泥板需要修理。

盖茨比把垫子扛在肩上，向游泳池走去。有一次他停下来挪动了一下，司机问他要不要帮忙，但是他摇了摇头，再过一会就消失在叶子正在变黄的树木中了。

始终没有人打电话来，可是男管家午觉也没睡，一直等到四点——等到那时即使有电话来也早已没有人接了。我有一个想法：盖茨比本人并不相信会有电话来的，而且他也许已经无所谓了。如果是这样的话，他一定会觉得他已经失去了那个旧日的温暖的世界，为了抱着一个梦太久而付出了很高的代价。他一定透过可怕的树叶仰

视过一片陌生的天空而感到毛骨悚然，同时发觉一朵玫瑰花是多么丑恶的东西，阳光照在刚刚露头的小草上又是多么残酷。这是一个新的世界，物质的然而并不真实，在这里可怜的幽魂，呼吸着空气般的轻梦，东飘西荡……就像那个灰蒙蒙的、古怪的人形穿过杂乱的树木悄悄地朝他走来。

汽车司机——他是沃尔夫山姆手下的一个人——听到了枪声，事后他可只能说 he 当时并没有十分重视。我从火车站把车子直接开到盖茨比家里，等我急急忙忙冲上前门的台阶，才第一次使屋里的人感到是出事了。但是我认为他们当时肯定已经知道了。我们四人，司机、男管家、园丁和我，几乎一言不发地急匆匆奔到游泳池边。

池里的水有一点微微的、几乎看不出的流动，从一头放进来的清水又流向另一头的排水管。随着隐隐的涟漪，那只有重负的橡皮垫子在池子里盲目地漂着。连水面也吹不皱的一阵微风就足以扰乱它那载着偶然的、重负偶然的航程。一堆落叶使它慢慢旋转，像经纬仪一样，在水上转出一道细细的红圈子。

我们抬起盖茨比朝着屋子里走以后，园丁才在不远的草丛里看见了威尔逊的尸体，于是这场大屠杀就结束了。

第九章

事隔两年，我回想起那天其余的时间，那一晚以及第二天，只记得一批又一批的警察、摄影师和新闻记者，在盖茨比家的前门口进进出出。外面的大门口有一根绳子拦住，旁边站着一名警察，不让看热闹的人进来，但是小男孩们不久就发现他们可以从我的院子里绕过来，因此总有几个孩子目瞪口呆地挤在游泳池旁边。那天下午，有一个神态自信的人，也许是一名侦探，低头检视威尔逊的尸体时用了“疯子”两个字，而他的语气偶然的权威就为第二天早上所有报纸的报道定了调子。

那些报道大多数都是一场噩梦——离奇古怪，捕风捉影，煞有介事，而且不真实。等到米切里斯在验尸时的证词透露了威尔逊对他妻子的猜疑以后，我以为整个故事不久就会被添油加醋在黄色小报上登出来了——不料凯瑟琳，她本可以信口开河的，却什么都不说，并且表示出惊人的魄力——她那描过的眉毛底下的两只坚定的眼睛笔直地看着验尸官，又发誓说她姐姐从来没见过盖茨比，说她姐姐和她丈夫生活在一起非常美满，说她姐姐从来没有什么不端的行为。她说得自己都信以为真了，又用手帕捂着脸痛哭了起来，仿佛连提出这样的疑问都是她受不了的。于是威尔逊就被归结为一个“悲伤过度精神失常”的人，以便这个案子可以保持最简单的情节。案子也就这样了结了。

但是事情的这个方面似乎整个都是不痛不痒、无关紧要的。我发现自己是站在盖茨比一边的，而且只有我一人。从我打电话到西卵镇报告惨案那一刻起，每一个关于他的揣测、每一个实际的问题，都提到我这里来。起初我感到又惊讶又迷惑；后来一小时又一小时过去，他还是躺在他的房子里，不动，不呼吸，也不说话，我才渐渐明白我在负责，因为除我以外没有任何人有兴趣——我的意思是说，那种每个人身后多少都有权利得到的强烈的个人兴趣。

在我们发现他的尸体半小时之后我就打了电话给黛西，本能地、毫不迟疑地给她打了电话。但是她和汤姆那天下午很早就出门了，还随身带了行李。

“没留地址吗？”

“没有。”

“说他们几时回来了吗？”

“没有。”

“知道他们到哪儿去了吗？我怎样能和他们取得联系？”

“我不知道；说不上来。”

我真想给他找一个人来。我真想走到他躺着的那间屋子里去安慰他说：“我一定给你找一个人来，盖茨比。别着急。相信我好了，我一定给你找一个人来……”

迈耶·沃尔夫山姆的名字不在电话簿里。男管家把他百老汇办公室的地址给我，我又打电话到电话局问讯处，但是等到我有了号码时已经早就过了五点，没有人接电话了。

“请你再摇一下好吗？”

“我已经摇过三次了。”

“有非常要紧的事。”

“对不起，那儿恐怕没有人。”

我回到客厅里去，屋子里突然挤满了官方的人员，起先我还以为是一些不速之客。虽然他们掀开被单，用惊恐的眼光看着盖茨比，可是他的抗议继续在我脑子里回响：

“我说，老兄，你一定得替我找个人来。你一定得想想办法。我一个人可受不了这个罪啊。”

有人来找我提问题，但是我脱了身跑上楼去，匆匆忙忙翻了一下他书桌上没锁的那些抽屉——他从没明确地告诉我他的父母已经死了。但是什么也找不到——只有丹·科迪的那张相片，那已经被人遗忘的粗野狂暴生活的象征，从墙上向下面凝视。

第二天早晨我派男管家到纽约去给沃尔夫山姆送一封信，信中向他打听消息，并恳请他搭下一班火车就来。我这样写的时候觉得这个请求似乎是多此一举。我认为他一看见报纸肯定马上就会赶来的，正如我认为中午以前黛西肯定会有电报来的——可是电报也没来，沃尔夫山姆先生也没到；什么人都没来，只有更多的警察、摄影师和新闻记者。等到男管家带回来沃尔夫山姆的回信时，我开始感到傲视一切，感到盖茨比和我可以团结一致横眉冷对他们所有的人。

亲爱的卡罗威先生：这个消息使我感到万分震惊，我几乎不敢相信是真的。那个人干的这种疯狂行为应当使我们大家都好好想想。我现在不能前来，因为我正在办理一些非常重要的业务，目前不能跟这件事发生牵连。过一些时候如有我可以出力的事，请派埃德加送封信通知我。我听到这种事后简直不知道自己身在何处，感到天昏地暗了。

您的忠实的，

迈耶·沃尔夫山姆

下面又匆匆附了一笔：

关于丧礼安排请告知。又及：根本不认识他家里人。

那天下午电话铃响，长途台说芝加哥有电话来，我以为这总该是黛西了。但等到接通了一听却是一个男人的声音，很轻很远的。

“我是斯莱格……”

“是吗？”这名字很生疏。

“那封信真够呛，是不？收到我的电报了吗？”

“什么电报也没有。”

“小派克倒霉了，”他话说得很快。“他在柜台上递证券的时候给逮住了。刚刚五分钟之前他们收到纽约的通知，列上了号码。你想得到吗？在这种乡下地方你没法料到……”

“喂！喂！”我上气不接下气地打断了他的话。“你听我说——这不是盖茨比先生。盖茨比先生死了。”

电话线那头沉默了好久，接着是一声惊叫……然后咔哒一声电话就挂断了。

我想大概是第三天，从明尼苏达州的一个小城镇来了一封署名亨利·C·盖兹的电报。上面只说发电人马上动身，要求等他到达后再举行葬礼。

来的是盖茨比的父亲，一个很庄重的老头子，非常可怜，非常沮丧，这样暖和的九月天就裹上了一件蹩脚的长外套。他激动得眼泪不停地往下流，我从他手里把旅行包和雨伞接过来时，他不停地伸手去拉他那撮稀稀的花白胡须，我好不容易才帮他脱下了大衣。他人快要垮了，于是我一面把他领到音乐厅里去，让他坐下，一面打发人去搞一点吃的来。但是他不肯吃东西，那杯牛奶也从他哆哆嗦嗦的手里泼了出来。

“我从芝加哥报纸上看到的，”他说，“芝加哥报纸上全都登了出来。我马上就动身了。”

“我没法子通知您。”

他的眼睛视而不见，可是不停地向屋子里四面看。

“是一个疯子干的，”他说，“他一定是疯了。”

“您喝杯咖啡不好吗？”我劝他。

“我什么都不要。我现在好了，您是……”

“卡罗威。”

“呃，我现在好了。他们把杰米放在哪儿？”

我把他领进客厅里他儿子停放的地方，把他留在那里。有几个小男孩爬上了台阶，正在往门厅里张望；等到我告诉他们是谁来了，他们才勉强地走开了。

过了一会儿盖兹先生打开门走了出来，他嘴巴张着，脸微微有点红，眼睛里断断续续洒下几滴泪水。他已经到了并不把死亡看作一件骇人听闻的事情的年纪，于是此刻他第一次向四周一望，看见门厅如此富丽堂皇，一间间大屋子从这里又通向别的屋子，他的悲伤就开始和一股又惊讶又骄傲的感情交织在一起了。我把他搀到楼上的一间卧室里；他一面脱上衣和背心，我一面告诉他一切安排都推迟了，等他来决定。

“我当时不知道您要怎么办，盖茨比先生……”

“我姓盖兹。”

“……盖兹先生。我以为您也许要把遗体运到西部去。”

他摇了摇头。

“杰米一向喜欢待在东部。他是在东部上升到他这个地位的。你是我孩子的朋友吗，先生？”

“我们是很知己的朋友。”

“他是大有前程的，你知道。他只是个年轻人，但是他在这个地方很有能耐。”

他郑重其事地用手碰碰脑袋，我也点了点头。

“假使他活下去的话，他会成为一个大人物的，像詹姆斯·J·希尔那样的人。他会帮助建设国家的。”

“确实是那样，”我局促不安地说。

他笨手笨脚地把绣花被单扯来扯去，想把它从床上拉下来，接着就硬邦邦地躺下去——立刻就睡着了。

那天晚上一个显然害怕的人打电话来，一定要先知道我是谁才肯报他自己的姓名。

“我是卡罗威先生，”我说。

“哦！”他似乎感到宽慰。“我是克利普斯普林格。”

我也感到宽慰，因为这一来盖茨比的墓前可能会多一个朋友了。我不愿意登报，引来一大堆看热闹的人，所以我就自己打电话通知了几个人。他们可真难找到。

“明天出殡，”我说。“下午三点，就在此地家里。我希望你转告凡是有意参加的人。”

“哦，一定，”他急忙说。“当然啦，我不大可能见到什么人，但是如果我碰到的

话。”

他的语气使我起了疑心。

“你自己当然是要来的。”

“呃，我一定想法子来。我打电话来是要问……”

“等等，”我打断了他的话。“先说你一定来怎么样？”

“呃，事实是……实际情况是这样的，我目前待在格林威治这里朋友家里，人家指望我明天和他们一起玩。事实上，明天要去野餐什么的。当然我走得开一定来。”

我忍不住叫了一声“嘿”，他也一定听到了，因为他很紧张地往下说：

“我打电话来是为了我留在那里的一双鞋。不知道能不能麻烦你让男管家给我寄来。你知道，那是双网球鞋，我离了它简直没办法。我的地址是B·F·……”

我没听他说完那个名字就把话筒挂上了。

在那以后我为盖茨比感到羞愧——还有一个我打电话去找的人竟然表示他是死有应得的。不过，这是我的过错，因为他是那些当初喝足了盖茨比的酒就大骂盖茨比的客人中的一个，我本来就不应该打电话给他的。

出殡那天的早晨，我到纽约去找迈耶·沃尔夫山姆；似乎用任何别的办法都找不到他。在开电梯的指点之下，我推开了一扇门，门上写着“珉字控股公司”，可是起先里面好像没有人。但是，我高声喊了几声“喂”也没人答应之后，一扇隔板后面突然传出争辩的声音，接着一个漂亮的犹太女人在里面的一个门口出现，用含有敌意的黑眼睛打量我。

“没人在家，”她说，“沃尔夫山姆先生到芝加哥去了。”

前一句话显然是撒谎，因为里面有人已经开始不成腔地用口哨吹奏《玫瑰经》。

“请说一声卡罗威先生要见他。”

“我又不能把他从芝加哥叫回来，对不对？”

正在这时有一个声音，毫无疑问是沃尔夫山姆的声音，从门的那边喊了一声“斯特拉”。

“你把名字留在桌上，”她很快地说，“等他回来我告诉他。”

“可是我知道他就在里面。”

她向我面前跨了一步，开始把两只手气冲冲地沿着臀部一上一下地移动。

“你们这些年轻人自以为你们随时可以闯进这里来，”她骂道，“我们都烦死了。我说他在芝加哥，他就是在芝加哥。”

我提了一下盖茨比的名字。

“哦……啊！”她又打量了我一下。“请您稍……您姓什么来着？”

她不见了。过了一会，迈耶·沃尔夫山姆就庄重地站在门口，两只手都伸了出来。他把我拉进他的办公室，一面用虔诚的口吻说在这种时候我们大家都很难过，一面敬我一支雪茄烟。

“我还记得我第一次见到他的情景，”他说，“刚刚离开军队的一名年轻的少校，胸口挂满了在战场上赢得的勋章。他穷得只好继续穿军服，因为他买不起便服。我

第一次见到他是那天他走进四十三号街怀恩勃兰纳开的弹子房找工作。他已经两天没吃饭了。‘跟我一块吃午饭去吧，’我说。不到半个钟头他就吃了四块多美元的饭菜。”

“是你帮他做起生意来的吗？”我问。

“帮他！我一手造就了他。”

“哦。”

“我把他从零开始培养起来的，从阴沟里捡起来的。我一眼就看出他是个仪表堂堂、文质彬彬的年轻人，等他告诉我他上过牛津，我就知道我可以派他大用场。我让他加入了美国退伍军人协会，后来他在那里面地位挺高的。他一出马就跑到奥尔巴尼去给我的一个主顾办了一件事。我们俩在一切方面都像这样亲密，”他举起了两个肥胖的指头，“永远在一起。”

我心里很纳闷，不知这种搭档是否也包括一九一九年世界棒球联赛那笔交易在内。

“现在他死了，”我隔了一会才说。“你是他最知己的朋友，因此我知道今天下午你一定会参加他的葬礼的。”

“我很想来。”

“那么，来就是啦。”

他鼻孔里的毛微微颤动，他摇摇头，泪水盈眶。

“我不能来.....我不能牵连进去，”他说。

“没有什么事可以牵连进去的。事情现在都过去了。”

“凡是有人被杀害，我总不愿意有任何牵连。我不介入。我年轻时就大不一样——如果一个朋友死了，不管怎么死的，我总是出力出到底。你也许会认为这是感情用事，可是我是说到做到的——一直拼到底。”

我看出了他决意不来，自有他的原因。于是我就站了起来。

“你是不是大学毕业的？”他突然问我。

有一会儿工夫我还以为他要提出搞点什么“关系”，可是他只点了点头，握了握我的手。

“咱们大家都应当学会在朋友活着的时候讲交情，而不要等到他死了之后，”他表示说。“在人死以后，我个人的原则是不管闲事。”

我离开他办公室的时候，天色已经变黑，我在蒙蒙细雨中回到了西卵。我换过衣服之后就到隔壁去，看到盖兹先生兴奋地在门厅里走来走去。他对他儿子和他儿子的财物所感到的自豪一直在不断地增长，现在他又有一样东西要给我看。

“杰米寄给我的这张照片。”他手指哆嗦着掏出了他的钱包。“你瞧吧。”

是这座房子的一张照片，四角破裂，也给许多手摸脏了。他热切地把每一个细节都指给我看。“你瞧！”随即又看我眼中有没有赞赏的神情。他把这张照片给人家看了那么多次数，我相信在他看来现在照片比真房子还要真。

“杰米把它寄给我的。我觉得这是一张很好看的照片，照得很好。”

“非常好。您近来见过他吗？”

“他两年前回过家来看我，给我买下了我现在住的房子。当然，他从家里跑走的时候我们很伤心，但是我现在明白他那样做是有道理的。他知道自己有远大的前程。他发迹之后一直对我很大方。”

他似乎不愿意把那张照片放回去，依依不舍地又在我眼前举了一会工夫。然后他把钱包放了回去，又从口袋里掏出一本破破烂烂的旧书，书名是《牛仔卡西迪》。

“你瞧瞧，这本书是他小时候看的。真是从小见大。”

他把书的封底翻开，掉转过来让我看。在最后的空白页上端端正正地写着“时间表”几个字和1906年9月12日的日期。下面是：

起床 上午6:00

哑铃体操及爬墙 6:15—6:30

学习电学等 7:15—8:15

工作 8:50—下午4:30

棒球及其他运动 下午4:30—5:00

练习演说、仪态 5:00—6:00

学习有用的新发明 7:00—9:00

个人决心

不要浪费时间去沙夫特家或（另一姓，字迹不清）

不再吸烟或嚼烟

每隔一天洗澡

每周读有益的书或杂志一册

每周储蓄五元（涂去）三元

对父母更加体贴

“我无意中发现这本书，”老头说，“真是从小见大，是不是？”

“真是从小见大。”

“杰米是注定了要出人头地的。他总是订出一些诸如此类的决心。你注意没有，他用什么办法提高自己的思想？他在这方面一向是了不起的。有一次他说我吃东西像猪一样，我把他揍了一顿。”

他舍不得把书合上，把每一条大声念了一遍，然后眼巴巴地看着我。我想他满以为我会把那张表抄下来给我自己用。

快到三点的时候，路德教会的那位牧师从弗勒兴来了，于是我开始不由自主地向窗外望，看看有没有别的车子来。盖茨比的父亲也和我一样。随着时间过去，用人都走进来站在门厅里等候，老人的眼睛开始焦急地眨起来，同时他又忐忑不安地说到外面的雨。牧师看了好几次表，我只好把他拉到一旁，请他再等半个钟头。但是毫无用处。没有一个人来。

五点钟左右我们三辆车子的行列开到墓地，在密密的小雨中在大门旁边停了下来——第一辆是灵车，又黑又湿，怪难看的，后面是盖兹先生、牧师和我坐在大型轿

车里，再后面一点的是四五个用人和西卵镇的邮差坐在盖茨比的旅行车里，大家都淋得透湿。正当我们穿过大门走进墓地时，我听见一辆车停下来，接着是一个人踩着湿透的草地在我们后面追上来的声音。我回头一看，原来是那个戴猫头鹰眼镜的人，三个月以前的一天晚上我发现他看着盖茨比图书室里的书惊叹不已。

从那以后我再没见过他。我不知道他怎么会知道今天安葬的，我也不知道他的姓名。雨水顺着他的厚眼镜流下来，他只好把眼镜摘下擦一擦，再看着那块挡雨的帆布从盖茨比的坟上卷起来。

这时我很想回忆一下盖茨比，但是他已经离得太远了，我只记得黛西既没来电报，也没送花，然而我并不感到气恼。我隐约听到有人喃喃念道：“上帝保佑雨中的死者，”接着那个猫头鹰眼睛的人用洪亮的声音说了一声“阿门！”

我们零零落落地在雨中跑回到车子上。猫头鹰眼睛在大门口跟我说了一会话。

“我没能赶到别墅来，”他说。

“别人也都没能来。”

“真的！”他大吃一惊。“啊，我的上帝！他们过去一来就是好几百嘛。”

他把眼镜摘了下来，里里外外都擦了一遍。

“这家伙真他妈的可怜，”他说。

我记忆中最鲜明的景象之一就是每年圣诞节从预备学校，以及后来从大学回到西部的情景。到芝加哥以远的地方去的同学往往在十二月一个黄昏六点钟聚在那座古老、幽暗的联邦车站，和几个家在芝加哥的朋友匆匆话别，只见他们已经裹入了他

们自己的节日欢娱气氛。我记得那些从东部某某私立女校回来的女学生的皮大衣以及她们在严寒的空气中噉噉喳喳的笑语，记得我们发现熟人时招手呼唤，记得互相比较收到的邀请：“你到奥德威家去吗？赫西家呢？舒尔茨家呢？”还记得紧紧抓在我们戴了手套的手里的长条绿色车票。最后还有停在月台门口轨道上的芝加哥—密尔沃基—圣保罗铁路的朦胧的黄色客车，看上去就像圣诞节一样地使人愉快。

火车在寒冬的黑夜里奔驰，真正的白雪、我们的雪，开始在两边向远方伸展，迎着车窗闪耀，威斯康星州的小车站暗灰的灯火从眼前掠过，这时空中突然出现一股使人神清气爽的寒气。我们吃过晚饭穿过寒冷的通廊往回走时，一路深深地呼吸着这寒气，在奇异的一个小时中难以言喻地意识到自己与这片乡土之间的血肉相连的关系，然后我们就要重新不留痕迹地融化在其中了。

这就是我的中西部——不是麦田，不是草原，也不是瑞典移民的荒凉村镇，而是我青年时代那些激动人心的还乡的火车，是严寒的黑夜里街灯和雪车的铃声，是圣诞冬青花环被窗内的灯火映在雪地的影子。我是其中的一部分，由于那些漫长的冬天我为人不免有点矜持，由于从小在卡罗威公馆长大，态度上也不免有点自满；在我们那个城市里，人家的住宅仍旧世代代称为某姓的公馆。我现在才明白这个故事到头来是一个西部的故事——汤姆和盖茨比、黛西、乔丹和我，我们都是西部人，也许我们具有什么共同的缺陷使我们无形中不能适应东部的生活。

即使东部最令我兴奋的时候，即使我最敏锐地感觉到比之俄亥俄河那边的那些枯燥无味、乱七八糟的城镇，那些只有儿童和老人可幸免于无止无休的闲话的城镇，东部具有无比的优越性——即使在那种时候，我也总觉得东部有畸形的地方。尤其西卵仍然出现在我做的比较荒唐的梦里。在我的梦中，这个小镇就像埃尔·格列柯画的一幅夜景：上百所房屋，既平常又怪诞，蹲伏在阴沉沉的天空和黯淡无光的月亮之

下。在前景里有四个板着面孔、身穿大礼服的男人沿人行道走着，抬着一副担架，上面躺着一个喝醉酒的女人，身上穿着一件白色的晚礼服。她一只手耷拉在一边，闪耀着珠宝的寒光。那几个人郑重其事地转身走进一所房子——走错了地方。但是没人知道这个女人的姓名，也没有人关心。

盖茨比死后，东部在我心目中就是这样鬼影幢幢，面目全非到超过了我眼睛矫正的能力。因此等到烧枯叶的蓝烟弥漫空中，寒风把晾在绳上的湿衣服吹得邦邦硬的时候，我就决定回家来了。

在我离开之前还有一件事要办，一件尴尬的、不愉快的事，本来也许应当不了了之的。但是我希望把事情收拾干净，而不指望那片乐于帮忙而又不动感情的大海来把我的垃圾冲掉。我去见了乔丹·贝克，从头到尾谈了围绕着我们两人之间发生的事情，然后谈到我后来的遭遇，而她躺在一张大椅子上听着，一动也不动。

她穿的是打高尔夫球的衣服，我还记得我当时想过她活像一幅很好的插图，她的下巴很神气地微微翘起，她头发像秋叶的颜色，她的脸和她放在膝盖上的浅棕色无指手套一个颜色。等我讲完之后，她告诉我她和另一个人订了婚，别的话一句没说。我怀疑她的话，虽然有好几个人只要她一点头就可以结婚的，但是我故作惊讶。一刹那间我寻思自己是否正在犯错误，接着我很快地考虑了一番就站起来告辞了。

“不管怎样，还是你甩掉我的，”乔丹忽然说，“你那天在电话上把我甩了。我现在拿你完全不当回事了，但是当时那倒是个新经验，我有好一阵子感到晕头转向的。”

我们俩握了握手。

“哦，你还记得吗，”她又加了一句。“我们有过一次关于开车的谈话？”

“啊……记不太清了。”

“你说过一个开车不小心的人只有在碰上另一个开车不小心的人之前才安全吧？瞧，我碰上了另一个开车不小心的人了，是不是？我是说我真不小心，竟然这样看错了人。我以为你是一个相当老实、正直的人。我以为那是你暗暗引以为荣的事。”

“我三十岁了，”我说，“要是我年轻五岁，也许我还可以欺骗自己，说这样做光明正大。”

她没有回答。我又气又恼，对她有几分依恋，同时心里又非常难过，只好转身走开了。

十月下旬的一个下午我碰到了汤姆·布坎农。他在五号路上走在我前面，还是那样机警和盛气凌人，两手微微离开他的身体，仿佛要打退对方的碰撞一样，同时把头忽左忽右地转动，配合他那双溜溜转的眼睛。我正要放慢脚步免得赶上他，他停了下来，蹙着眉头向一家珠宝店的橱窗里看。忽然间他看见了我，就往回走，伸出手来。

“怎么啦，尼克？你不愿意跟我握手吗？”

“好啦。你知道我对你的看法。”

“你发疯了，尼克，”他急忙说，“疯得够呛。我不明白你是怎么回事。”

“汤姆，”我质问道，“那天下午你对威尔逊说了什么？”

他一言不发地瞪着我，于是我知道我当时对于不明底细的那几个小时的猜测果然是

猜对了。我掉头就走，可是他紧跟上一步，抓住了我的胳膊。

“我对他说了实话，”他说，“他来到我家门口，这时我们正准备出去，后来我让人传话下来说我们不在家，他就想冲上楼来。他已经疯狂到可以杀死我的地步，要是我没告诉他那辆车是谁的。到了我家里他的手每一分钟都放在他口袋里的一把手枪上……”他突然停住了，态度强硬起来。“就算我告诉他又该怎样？那家伙自己找死。他把你迷惑了，就像他迷惑了黛西一样，其实他是个心肠狠毒的家伙。他撞死了莱特尔就像撞死了一条狗一样，连车子都不停一下。”

我无话可说，除了这个说不出来的事实：事情并不是这样的。

“你不要以为我没有受痛苦——我告诉你，我去退掉那套公寓时，看见那盒倒霉的喂狗的饼干还搁在餐具柜上，我坐下来像小娃娃一样放声大哭。我的天，真难受……”

我不能宽恕他，也不能喜欢他，但是我看到，他所做的事情在他自己看来完全是有理的。一切都是粗心大意、混乱不堪的。汤姆和黛西，他们是粗心大意的人——他们砸碎了东西，毁灭了人，然后就退缩到自己的金钱或者麻木不仁或者不管什么使他们留在一起的东西之中，让别人去收拾他们的烂摊子……

我跟他握了握手；不肯握手未免太无聊了，因为我突然觉得仿佛我是在跟一个小孩子说话。随后他走进那家珠宝店去买一串珍珠项链——或者也许只是一副袖扣——永远摆脱了我这乡下佬吹毛求疵的责难。

我离开的时候，盖茨比的房子还是空着——他草坪上的草长得跟我的一样高了。镇上有一个出租汽车司机载了客人经过大门口没有一次不把车子停一下，用手向里面指指点点；也许出事的那天夜里开车送黛西和盖茨比到西卵的就是他，也许他已经

编造了一个独出心裁的故事。我不要听他讲，因此我下火车时总躲开他。

每星期六晚上我都在纽约度过，因为盖茨比那些灯火辉煌、光彩炫目的宴会我记忆犹新，我仍然可以听到微弱的音乐和欢笑的声音不断地从他园子里飘过来，还有一辆辆汽车在他的车道上开来开去。有一晚我确实听见那儿真有一辆汽车，看见车灯照在门口台阶上。但是我并没去调查。大概是最后的一位客人，刚从天涯海角归来，还不知道宴会早已收场了。

在最后那个晚上，箱子已经装好，车子也卖给了杂货店老板，我走过去再看一眼那座庞大而杂乱的、意味着失败的房子。白大理石台阶上有哪个男孩用砖头涂了一个脏字眼儿，映在月光里分外触目，于是我把它擦了，在石头上把鞋子刮得沙沙作响。后来我又溜达到海边，仰天躺在沙滩上。

那些海滨大别墅现在大多已经关闭了，四周几乎没有灯火，除了海湾上一只渡船的幽暗、移动的灯光。当明月上升的时候，那些微不足道的房屋慢慢消逝，直到我逐渐意识到当年为荷兰水手的眼睛放出异彩的这个古岛——新世界的一片清新碧绿的地方。它那些消失了的树木，那些为盖茨比的别墅让路而被砍伐的树木，曾经一度迎风飘拂，低声响应人类最后的也是最伟大的梦想，在那昙花一现的神妙的瞬间，人面对这个新大陆一定屏息惊异，不由自主地堕入他既不理解也不企求的一种美学的观赏，在历史上最后一次面对着和他感到惊奇的能力相称的奇观。

当我坐在那里缅怀那个古老的、未知的世界时，我也想到了盖茨比第一次认出了黛西的码头尽头的那盏绿灯时所感到的惊奇。他经历了漫长的道路才来到这片蓝色的草坪上，他的梦一定似乎近在眼前，他几乎不可能抓不住的。他不知道那个梦已经丢在他背后了，丢在这个城市那边那一片无垠的混沌之中不知什么地方了，那里共和国的黑黝黝的田野在夜色中向前伸展。

盖茨比信奉这盏绿灯，这个一年年在我们眼前渐渐远去的极乐的将来。它从前逃脱了我们的追求，不过那没关系——明天我们跑得更快一点，把胳膊伸得更远一点.....总有一天.....

于是我们继续奋力向前，逆水行舟，被不断地向后推，被推入过去。

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The Great Gatsby



The Great Gatsby

The Great Gatsby

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Then wear the gold hat,if that will move her;

If you can bounce high,bounce for her too,

Till she cry 'Lover,gold-hatted,high-bouncing lover,I must have
you!'

——THOMAS PARKE D'INVILLIERS

Chapter One

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.

'Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone,' he told me, 'just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had.'

He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores. The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought—frequently I have feigned sleep, preoccupation, or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon; for the intimate revelations of young men, or at least the terms in which they express them, are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions. Reserving judgments is a matter of

infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that,as my father snobbishly suggested,and I snobbishly repeat,a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth.

And,after boasting this way of my tolerance,I come to the admission that it has a limit. Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes,but after a certain point I don't care what it's founded on. When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever;I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only Gatsby,the man who gives his name to this book,was exempt from my reaction—Gatsby,who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures,then there was something gorgeous about him,some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life,as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the 'creative temperament' — it was an extraordinary gift for hope,a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. No—Gatsby turned out all right at the end;it is what preyed on Gatsby,what foul dust floated in the wake

of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.

*

My family have been prominent,well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations. The Carraways are something of a clan,and we have a tradition that we're descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch,but the actual founder of my line was my grandfather's brother,who came here in fifty-one,sent a substitute to the Civil War,and started the wholesale hardware business that my father carries on to-day.

I never saw this great-uncle,but I'm supposed to look like him—with special reference to the rather hard-boiled painting that hangs in father's office. I graduated from New Haven in 1915,just a quarter of a century after my father,and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless. Instead of being the warm center of the world,the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe—so I decided to go East and learn the bond business. Everybody I knew was in the bond business,so I supposed it could support one more single man. All my aunts and uncles talked it over as if they were choosing a prep school for me,and finally said, 'Why—ye-es' with very

grave,hesitant faces. Father agreed to finance me for a year,and after various delays I came East,permanently,I thought,in the spring of twenty-two.

The practical thing was to find rooms in the city,but it was a warm season,and I had just left a country of wide lawns and friendly trees,so when a young man at the office suggested that we take a house together in a commuting town,it sounded like a great idea. He found the house,a weather-beaten cardboard bungalow at eighty a month,but at the last minute the firm ordered him to Washington,and I went out to the country alone. I had a dog—at least I had him for a few days until he ran away—and an old Dodge and a Finnish woman,who made my bed and cooked breakfast and muttered Finnish wisdom to herself over the electric stove.

It was lonely for a day or so until one morning some man,more recently arrived than I,stopped me on the road.

‘How do you get to West Egg village?’ he asked helplessly.

I told him. And as I walked on I was lonely no longer. I was a guide,a pathfinder,an original settler. He had casually conferred on me the freedom of the neighborhood.

And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees,just as things grow in fast movies,I had that familiar

conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer.

There was so much to read,for one thing,and so much fine health to be pulled down out of the young breath-giving air. I bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities,and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from the mint,promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas and Morgan and Maecenas knew. And I had the high intention of reading many other books besides. I was rather literary in college—one year I wrote a series of very solemn and obvious editorials for the Yale News—and now I was going to bring back all such things into my life and become again that most limited of all specialists,the ‘well-rounded man’ . This isn't just an epigram—life is much more successfully looked at from a single window,after all.

It was a matter of chance that I should have rented a house in one of the strangest communities in North America. It was on that slender riotous island which extends itself due east of New York—and where there are,among other natural curiosities,two unusual formations of land. Twenty miles from the city a pair of enormous eggs,identical in contour and separated only by a courtesy bay,jut out into the most domesticated body of salt water in the Western hemisphere,the great wet barnyard of Long Island Sound. They are not perfect ovals—like the egg in the Columbus story,they are both crushed flat at the contact end—but their physical resemblance

must be a source of perpetual wonder to the gulls that fly overhead. To the wingless a more interesting phenomenon is their dissimilarity in every particular except shape and size.

I lived at West Egg, the—well, the less fashionable of the two, though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them. My house was at the very tip of the egg, only fifty yards from the Sound, and squeezed between two huge places that rented for twelve or fifteen thousand a season. The one on my right was a colossal affair by any standard—it was a factual imitation of some Hôtel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden. It was Gatsby's mansion. Or, rather, as I didn't know Mr. Gatsby, it was a mansion inhabited by a gentleman of that name. My own house was an eyesore, but it was a small eyesore, and it had been overlooked, so I had a view of the water, a partial view of my neighbor's lawn, and the consoling proximity of millionaires—all for eighty dollars a month.

Across the courtesy bay the white palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered along the water, and the history of the summer really begins on the evening I drove over there to have dinner with the Tom Buchanans. Daisy was my second cousin once removed, and I'd known Tom in college. And just after the war I spent two days with

them in Chicago.

Her husband, among various physical accomplishments, had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Haven—a national figure in a way, one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterward savours of anti-climax. His family were enormously wealthy—even in college his freedom with money was a matter for reproach—but now he'd left Chicago and come East in a fashion that rather took your breath away: for instance, he'd brought down a string of polo ponies from Lake Forest. It was hard to realize that a man in my own generation was wealthy enough to do that.

Why they came East I don't know. They had spent a year in France for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together. This was a permanent move, said Daisy over the telephone, but I didn't believe it—I had no sight into Daisy's heart, but I felt that Tom would drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game.

And so it happened that on a warm windy evening I drove over to East Egg to see two old friends whom I scarcely knew at all. Their house was even more elaborate than I expected, a cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion, overlooking the bay. The lawn

started at the beach and ran toward the front door for a quarter of a mile,jumping over sun-dials and brick walks and burning gardens—finally when it reached the house drifting up the side in bright vines as though from the momentum of its run. The front was broken by a line of french windows,glowing now with reflected gold and wide open to the warm windy afternoon,and Tom Buchanan in riding clothes was standing with his legs apart on the front porch.

He had changed since his New Haven years. Now he was a sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body—he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing,and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage—a cruel body.

His speaking voice,a gruff husky tenor,added to the impression of fractiousness he conveyed. There was a touch of paternal contempt in it,even toward people he liked—and there were men at New Haven who had hated his guts.

‘Now,don't think my opinion on these matters is final,’ he seemed

to say, 'just because I'm stronger and more of a man than you are.' We were in the same senior society, and while we were never intimate I always had the impression that he approved of me and wanted me to like him with some harsh, defiant wistfulness of his own.

We talked for a few minutes on the sunny porch.

'I've got a nice place here,' he said, his eyes flashing about restlessly.

Turning me around by one arm, he moved a broad flat hand along the front vista, including in its sweep a sunken Italian garden, a half acre of deep, pungent roses, and a snub-nosed motor-boat that bumped the tide offshore.

'It belonged to Demaine, the oil man.' He turned me around again, politely and abruptly. 'We'll go inside.'

We walked through a high hallway into a bright rosy-colored space, fragilely bound into the house by french windows at either end. The windows were ajar and gleaming white against the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into the house. A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling, and then rippled over the wine-colored

rug,making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea.

The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white,and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house. I must have stood for a few moments listening to the whip and snap of the curtains and the groan of a picture on the wall. Then there was a boom as Tom Buchanan shut the rear windows and the caught wind died out about the room,and the curtains and the rugs and the two young women ballooned slowly to the floor.

The younger of the two was a stranger to me. She was extended full length at her end of the divan,completely motionless,and with her chin raised a little,as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of it—indeed,I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her by coming in.

The other girl,Daisy,made an attempt to rise—she leaned slightly forward with a conscientious expression—then she laughed,an absurd,charming little laugh,and I laughed too and came forward into the room.

'I'm p-paralyzed with happiness.'

She laughed again,as if she said something very witty,and held my hand for a moment,looking up into my face,promising that there was no one in the world she so much wanted to see. That was a way she had. She hinted in a murmur that the surname of the balancing girl was Baker. (I've heard it said that Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean toward her;an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming.)

At any rate,Miss Baker's lips fluttered,she nodded at me almost imperceptibly,and then quickly tipped her head back again—the object she was balancing had obviously tottered a little and given her something of a fright. Again a sort of apology arose to my lips. Almost any exhibition of complete self-sufficiency draws a stunned tribute from me.

I looked back at my cousin,who began to ask me questions in her low,thrilling voice. It was the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down,as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again. Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it,bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth,but there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget:a singing compulsion,a whispered 'Listen,' a promise that she had done gay,exciting things just a while since and that there were gay,exciting things hovering in the next hour.

I told her how I had stopped off in Chicago for a day on my way East, and how a dozen people had sent their love through me.

'Do they miss me?' she cried ecstatically.

'The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath, and there's a persistent wail all night along the north shore.'

'How gorgeous! Let's go back, Tom. To-morrow!' Then she added irrelevantly: 'You ought to see the baby.'

'I'd like to.'

'She's asleep. She's three years old. Haven't you ever seen her?'

'Never.'

'Well, you ought to see her. She's —'

Tom Buchanan, who had been hovering restlessly about the room, stopped and rested his hand on my shoulder.

'What you doing, Nick?'

'I'm a bond man.'

'Who with?'

I told him.

'Never heard of them,' he remarked decisively.

This annoyed me.

'You will,' I answered shortly. 'You will if you stay in the East.'

'Oh,I'll stay in the East,don't you worry,' he said,glancing at Daisy and then back at me,as if he were alert for something more.

'I'd be a God damned fool to live anywhere else.'

At this point Miss Baker said: 'Absolutely!' with such suddenness that I started—it was the first word she had uttered since I came into the room. Evidently it surprised her as much as it did me,for she yawned and with a series of rapid,deft movements stood up into the room.

'I'm stiff,' she complained, 'I've been lying on that sofa for as long as I can remember.'

'Don't look at me,' Daisy retorted, 'I've been trying to get you to New York all afternoon.'

'No,thanks,' said Miss Baker to the four cocktails just in from the pantry, 'I'm absolutely in training.'

Her host looked at her incredulously.

'You are!' He took down his drink as if it were a drop in the bottom of a glass. 'How you ever get anything done is beyond me.'

I looked at Miss Baker, wondering what it was she 'got done.' I enjoyed looking at her. She was a slender, small-breasted girl, with an erect carriage, which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet. Her grey sun-strained eyes looked back at me with polite reciprocal curiosity out of a wan, charming, discontented face. It occurred to me now that I had seen her, or a picture of her, somewhere before.

'You live in West Egg,' she remarked contemptuously. 'I know somebody there.'

'I don't know a single —'

'You must know Gatsby.'

'Gatsby?' demanded Daisy. 'What Gatsby?'

Before I could reply that he was my neighbor dinner was announced; wedging his tense arm imperatively under mine, Tom Buchanan compelled me from the room as though he were moving a checker to another square.

Slenderly, languidly, their hands set lightly on their hips, the two young women preceded us out on to a rosy-colored porch, open toward

the sunset,where four candles flickered on the table in the diminished wind.

'Why candles?' objected Daisy,frowning. She snapped them out with her fingers. 'In two weeks it'll be the longest day in the year.' She looked at us all radiantly. 'Do you always watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it? I always watch for the longest day in the year and then miss it.'

'We ought to plan something,' yawned Miss Baker,sitting down at the table as if she were getting into bed.

'All right,' said Daisy. 'What'll we plan?' She turned to me helplessly: 'What do people plan?'

Before I could answer her eyes fastened with an awed expression on her little finger.

'Look!' she complained; 'I hurt it.'

We all looked—the knuckle was black and blue.

'You did it,Tom,' she said accusingly. 'I know you didn't mean to,but you did do it. That's what I get for marrying a brute of a man,a great,big,hulking physical specimen of a —'

'I hate that word hulking,' objected Tom crossly, 'even in kidding.'

'Hulking,' insisted Daisy.

Sometimes she and Miss Baker talked at once,unobtrusively and with a bantering inconsequence that was never quite chatter,that was as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire. They were here,and they accepted Tom and me,making only a polite pleasant effort to entertain or to be entertained. They knew that presently dinner would be over and a little later the evening too would be over and casually put away. It was sharply different from the West,where an evening was hurried from phase to phase toward its close,in a continually disappointed anticipation or else in sheer nervous dread of the moment itself.

'You make me feel uncivilized,Daisy,' I confessed on my second glass of corky but rather impressive claret. 'Can't you talk about crops or something?'

I meant nothing in particular by this remark,but it was taken up in an unexpected way.

'Civilization's going to pieces,' broke out Tom violently. 'I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read "The Rise of the Coloured Empires" by this man Goddard?'

'Why,no,' I answered,rather surprised by his tone.

'Well,it's a fine book,and everybody ought to read it. The idea is

if we don't look out the white race will be—will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff;it's been proved.'

'Tom's getting very profound,' said Daisy,with an expression of unthoughtful sadness. 'He reads deep books with long words in them. What was that word we —'

'Well,these books are all scientific,' insisted Tom,glancing at her impatiently. 'This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us,who are the dominant race,to watch out or these other races will have control of things.'

'We've got to beat them down,' whispered Daisy,winking ferociously toward the fervent sun.

'You ought to live in California —' began Miss Baker,but Tom interrupted her by shifting heavily in his chair.

'This idea is that we're Nordics. I am,and you are,and you are,and —' After an infinitesimal hesitation he included Daisy with a slight nod,and she winked at me again. '— And we've produced all the things that go to make civilization—oh,science and art,and all that. Do you see?'

There was something pathetic in his concentration,as if his complacency,more acute than of old,was not enough to him any more. When,almost immediately,the telephone rang inside and the butler

left the porch Daisy seized upon the momentary interruption and leaned toward me.

'I'll tell you a family secret,' she whispered enthusiastically.

'It's about the butler's nose. Do you want to hear about the butler's nose?'

'That's why I came over to-night.'

'Well,he wasn't always a butler;he used to be the silver polisher for some people in New York that had a silver service for two hundred people. He had to polish it from morning till night,until finally it began to affect his nose —'

'Things went from bad to worse,' suggested Miss Baker.

'Yes. Things went from bad to worse,until finally he had to give up his position.'

For a moment the last sunshine fell with romantic affection upon her glowing face;her voice compelled me forward breathlessly as I listened—then the glow faded,each light deserting her with lingering regret,like children leaving a pleasant street at dusk.

The butler came back and murmured something close to Tom's ear,whereupon Tom frowned,pushed back his chair,and without a word went inside. As if his absence quickened something within her,Daisy

leaned forward again,her voice glowing and singing.

'I love to see you at my table,Nick. You remind me of a—of a rose,an absolute rose. Doesn't he?' She turned to Miss Baker for confirmation: 'An absolute rose?'

This was untrue. I am not even faintly like a rose. She was only extemporizing,but a stirring warmth flowed from her,as if her heart was trying to come out to you concealed in one of those breathless,thrilling words. Then suddenly she threw her napkin on the table and excused herself and went into the house.

Miss Baker and I exchanged a short glance consciously devoid of meaning. I was about to speak when she sat up alertly and said

'Sh!' in a warning voice. A subdued impassioned murmur was audible in the room beyond,and Miss Baker leaned forward unashamed,trying to hear. The murmur trembled on the verge of coherence,sank down,mounted excitedly,and then ceased altogether.

'This Mr.Gatsby you spoke of is my neighbor —' I began.

'Don't talk. I want to hear what happens.'

'Is something happening?' I inquired innocently.

'You mean to say you don't know?' said Miss Baker,honestly surprised. 'I thought everybody knew.'

'I don't.'

'Why —' she said hesitantly, 'Tom's got some woman in New York.'

'Got some woman?' I repeated blankly.

Miss Baker nodded.

'She might have the decency not to telephone him at dinner time. Don't you think?'

Almost before I had grasped her meaning there was the flutter of a dress and the crunch of leather boots, and Tom and Daisy were back at the table.

'It couldn't be helped!' cried Daisy with tense gaiety.

She sat down, glanced searchingly at Miss Baker and then at me, and continued: 'I looked outdoors for a minute, and it's very romantic outdoors. There's a bird on the lawn that I think must be a nightingale come over on the Cunard or White Star Line. He's singing away —' Her voice sang: 'It's romantic, isn't it, Tom?'

'Very romantic,' he said, and then miserably to me: 'If it's light enough after dinner, I want to take you down to the stables.'

The telephone rang inside, startlingly, and as Daisy shook her head

decisively at Tom the subject of the stables,in fact all subjects,vanished into air. Among the broken fragments of the last five minutes at table I remember the candles being lit again,pointlessly,and I was conscious of wanting to look squarely at every one,and yet to avoid all eyes. I couldn't guess what Daisy and Tom were thinking,but I doubt if even Miss Baker,who seemed to have mastered a certain hardy skepticism,was able utterly to put this fifth guest's shrill metallic urgency out of mind. To a certain temperament the situation might have seemed intriguing—my own instinct was to telephone immediately for the police.

The horses,needless to say,were not mentioned again. Tom and Miss Baker,with several feet of twilight between them,strolled back into the library,as if to a vigil beside a perfectly tangible body,while,trying to look pleasantly interested and a little deaf,I followed Daisy around a chain of connecting verandas to the porch in front. In its deep gloom we sat down side by side on a wicker settee.

Daisy took her face in her hands as if feeling its lovely shape,and her eyes moved gradually out into the velvet dusk. I saw that turbulent emotions possessed her,so I asked what I thought would be some sedative questions about her little girl.

‘We don't know each other very well,Nick,’ she said suddenly.

'Even if we are cousins. You didn't come to my wedding.'

'I wasn't back from the war.'

'That's true.' She hesitated. 'Well,I've had a very bad time,Nick,and I'm pretty cynical about everything.'

Evidently she had reason to be. I waited but she didn't say any more,and after a moment I returned rather feebly to the subject of her daughter.

'I suppose she talks,and—eats,and everything.'

'Oh,yes.' She looked at me absently. 'Listen,Nick;let me tell you what I said when she was born. Would you like to hear?'

'Very much.'

'It'll show you how I've gotten to feel about—things. Well,she was less than an hour old and Tom was God knows where. I woke up out of the ether with an utterly abandoned feeling,and asked the nurse right away if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl,and so I turned my head away and wept. "All right," I said, "I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world,a beautiful little fool."

'You see I think everything's terrible anyhow,' she went on in a

convinced way. 'Everybody thinks so—the most advanced people. And I know. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything.' Her eyes flashed around her in a defiant way, rather like Tom's, and she laughed with thrilling scorn. 'Sophisticated—God, I'm sophisticated!'

The instant her voice broke off, ceasing to compel my attention, my belief, I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. It made me uneasy, as though the whole evening had been a trick of some sort to exact a contributory emotion from me. I waited, and sure enough, in a moment she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged.

*

Inside, the crimson room bloomed with light. Tom and Miss Baker sat at either end of the long couch and she read aloud to him from the Saturday Evening Post—the words, murmurous and uninflected, running together in a soothing tune. The lamp-light, bright on his boots and dull on the autumn-leaf yellow of her hair, glinted along the paper as she turned a page with a flutter of slender muscles in her arms.

When we came in she held us silent for a moment with a lifted hand.

'To be continued,' she said, tossing the magazine on the

table, 'in our very next issue.'

Her body asserted itself with a restless movement of her knee, and she stood up.

'Ten o'clock,' she remarked, apparently finding the time on the ceiling. 'Time for this good girl to go to bed.'

'Jordan's going to play in the tournament to-morrow,' explained Daisy, 'over at Westchester.'

'Oh—you're Jordan Baker.'

I knew now why her face was familiar—its pleasing contemptuous expression had looked out at me from many rotogravure pictures of the sporting life at Asheville and Hot Springs and Palm Beach. I had heard some story of her too, a critical, unpleasant story, but what it was I had forgotten long ago.

'Good night,' she said softly. 'Wake me at eight, won't you.'

'If you'll get up.'

'I will. Good night, Mr. Carraway. See you anon.'

'Of course you will,' confirmed Daisy. 'In fact I think I'll arrange a marriage. Come over often, Nick, and I'll sort of—oh—fling you together. You know—lock you up accidentally in linen

closets and push you out to sea in a boat, and all that sort of thing —'

'Good night,' called Miss Baker from the stairs. 'I haven't heard a word.'

'She's a nice girl,' said Tom after a moment. 'They oughtn't to let her run around the country this way.'

'Who oughtn't to?' inquired Daisy coldly.

'Her family.'

'Her family is one aunt about a thousand years old. Besides, Nick's going to look after her, aren't you, Nick? She's going to spend lots of week-ends out here this summer. I think the home influence will be very good for her.'

Daisy and Tom looked at each other for a moment in silence.

'Is she from New York?' I asked quickly.

'From Louisville. Our white girlhood was passed together there. Our beautiful white —'

'Did you give Nick a little heart to heart talk on the veranda?' demanded Tom suddenly.

'Did I?' She looked at me. 'I can't seem to remember, but I think

we talked about the Nordic race. Yes,I'm sure we did. It sort of crept up on us and first thing you know —'

'Don't believe everything you hear,Nick,' he advised me.

I said lightly that I had heard nothing at all,and a few minutes later I got up to go home. They came to the door with me and stood side by side in a cheerful square of light. As I started my motor Daisy peremptorily called: 'Wait!'

'I forgot to ask you something,and it's important. We heard you were engaged to a girl out West.'

'That's right,' corroborated Tom kindly. 'We heard that you were engaged.'

'It's a libel. I'm too poor.'

'But we heard it,' insisted Daisy,surprising me by opening up again in a flower-like way. 'We heard it from three people,so it must be true.'

Of course I knew what they were referring to,but I wasn't even vaguely engaged. The fact that gossip had published the banns was one of the reasons I had come East. You can't stop going with an old friend on account of rumors,and on the other hand I had no intention of being rumored into marriage.

Their interest rather touched me and made them less remotely rich—nevertheless,I was confused and a little disgusted as I drove away. It seemed to me that the thing for Daisy to do was to rush out of the house,child in arms—but apparently there were no such intentions in her head. As for Tom,the fact that he 'had some woman in New York' was really less surprising than that he had been depressed by a book. Something was making him nibble at the edge of stale ideas as if his sturdy physical egotism no longer nourished his peremptory heart.

Already it was deep summer on roadhouse roofs and in front of wayside garages,where new red petrol-pumps sat out in pools of light and when I reached my estate at West Egg I ran the car under its shed and sat for a while on an abandoned grass roller in the yard. The wind had blown off,leaving a loud,bright night,with wings beating in the trees and a persistent organ sound as the full bellows of the earth blew the frogs full of life. The silhouette of a moving cat wavered across the moonlight,and,turning my head to watch it,I saw that I was not alone—fifty feet away a figure had emerged from the shadow of my neighbor's mansion and was standing with his hands in his pockets regarding the silver pepper of the stars. Something in his leisurely movements and the secure position of his feet upon the lawn suggested that it was Mr.Gatsby himself,come out to determine what share was his of our local

heavens.

I decided to call to him. Miss Baker had mentioned him at dinner, and that would do for an introduction. But I didn't call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone—he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward—and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness.

Chapter Two

About half way between West Egg and New York the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile,so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land. This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens;where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and,finally,with a transcendent effort,of ash-grey men,who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of grey cars crawls along an invisible track,gives out a ghastly creak,and comes to rest,and immediately the ash-grey men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud,which screens their obscure operations from your sight.

But above the grey land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift endlessly over it,you perceive,after a moment,the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic—their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face,but,instead,from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose. Evidently some wild wag of an oculist set them there to fatten his practice in the borough of Queens,and then sank down himself into eternal blindness,or forgot them and moved away. But his eyes,dimmed a little by many paintless

days,under sun and rain,brood on over the solemn dumping ground.

The valley of ashes is bounded on one side by a small foul river,and,when the drawbridge is up to let barges through,the passengers on waiting trains can stare at the dismal scene for as long as half an hour. There is always a halt there of at least a minute,and it was because of this that I first met Tom Buchanan's mistress.

The fact that he had one was insisted upon wherever he was known. His acquaintances resented the fact that he turned up in popular cafés with her and,leaving her at a table,sauntered about,chatting with whomsoever he knew. Though I was curious to see her,I had no desire to meet her—but I did. I went up to New York with Tom on the train one afternoon,and when we stopped by the ashheaps he jumped to his feet and,taking hold of my elbow,literally forced me from the car.

‘We're getting off,’ he insisted. ‘I want you to meet my girl.’

I think he'd tanked up a good deal at luncheon,and his determination to have my company bordered on violence. The supercilious assumption was that on Sunday afternoon I had nothing better to do.

I followed him over a low whitewashed railroad fence,and we walked

back a hundred yards along the road under Doctor Eckleburg's persistent stare. The only building in sight was a small block of yellow brick sitting on the edge of the waste land, a sort of compact Main Street ministering to it, and contiguous to absolutely nothing. One of the three shops it contained was for rent and another was an all-night restaurant, approached by a trail of ashes; the third was a garage—Repairs. GEORGE B. WILSON. Cars bought and sold.—and I followed Tom inside.

The interior was unprosperous and bare; the only car visible was the dust-covered wreck of a Ford which crouched in a dim corner. It had occurred to me that this shadow of a garage must be a blind, and that sumptuous and romantic apartments were concealed overhead, when the proprietor himself appeared in the door of an office, wiping his hands on a piece of waste. He was a blond, spiritless man, anaemic, and faintly handsome. When he saw us a damp gleam of hope sprang into his light blue eyes.

'Hello, Wilson, old man,' said Tom, slapping him jovially on the shoulder. 'How's business?'

'I can't complain,' answered Wilson unconvincingly. 'When are you going to sell me that car?'

'Next week; I've got my man working on it now.'

'Works pretty slow,don't he?'

'No,he doesn't,' said Tom coldly. 'And if you feel that way about it,maybe I'd better sell it somewhere else after all.'

'I don't mean that,' explained Wilson quickly. 'I just meant —'

His voice faded off and Tom glanced impatiently around the garage. Then I heard footsteps on a stairs,and in a moment the thickish figure of a woman blocked out the light from the office door. She was in the middle thirties,and faintly stout,but she carried her flesh sensuously as some women can. Her face,above a spotted dress of dark blue crêpe-de-chine,contained no facet or gleam of beauty,but there was an immediately perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of her body were continually smouldering. She smiled slowly and,walking through her husband as if he were a ghost,shook hands with Tom,looking him flush in the eye. Then she wet her lips,and without turning around spoke to her husband in a soft,coarse voice:

'Get some chairs,why don't you,so somebody can sit down.'

'Oh,sure,' agreed Wilson hurriedly,and went toward the little office,mingling immediately with the cement color of the walls. A white ashen dust veiled his dark suit and his pale hair as it

veiled everything in the vicinity—except his wife, who moved close to Tom.

'I want to see you,' said Tom intently. 'Get on the next train.'

'All right.'

'I'll meet you by the news-stand on the lower level.'

She nodded and moved away from him just as George Wilson emerged with two chairs from his office door.

We waited for her down the road and out of sight. It was a few days before the Fourth of July, and a grey, scrawny Italian child was setting torpedoes in a row along the railroad track.

'Terrible place, isn't it,' said Tom, exchanging a frown with Doctor Eckleburg.

'Awful.'

'It does her good to get away.'

'Doesn't her husband object?'

'Wilson? He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York. He's so dumb he doesn't know he's alive.'

So Tom Buchanan and his girl and I went up together to New York—or not quite together, for Mrs. Wilson sat discreetly in another car. Tom deferred that much to the sensibilities of those East Eggers who might be on the train.

She had changed her dress to a brown figured muslin, which stretched tight over her rather wide hips as Tom helped her to the platform in New York. At the news-stand she bought a copy of Town Tattle and a moving-picture magazine, and in the station drug-store some cold cream and a small flask of perfume. Upstairs, in the solemn echoing drive she let four taxicabs drive away before she selected a new one, lavender-coloured with grey upholstery, and in this we slid out from the mass of the station into the glowing sunshine. But immediately she turned sharply from the window and, leaning forward, tapped on the front glass.

‘I want to get one of those dogs,’ she said earnestly. ‘I want to get one for the apartment. They’re nice to have—a dog.’

We backed up to a grey old man who bore an absurd resemblance to John D. Rockefeller. In a basket swung from his neck cowered a dozen very recent puppies of an indeterminate breed.

‘What kind are they?’ asked Mrs. Wilson eagerly, as he came to the taxi-window.

'All kinds. What kind do you want,lady?'

'I'd like to get one of those police dogs;I don't suppose you got that kind?'

The man peered doubtfully into the basket,plunged in his hand and drew one up,wriggling,by the back of the neck.

'That's no police dog,' said Tom.

'No,it's not exactly a police dog,' said the man with disappointment in his voice. 'It's more of an Airedale.' He passed his hand over the brown washrag of a back. 'Look at that coat. Some coat. That's a dog that'll never bother you with catching cold.'

'I think it's cute,' said Mrs.Wilson enthusiastically. 'How much is it?'

'That dog?' He looked at it admiringly. 'That dog will cost you ten dollars.'

The Airedale—undoubtedly there was an Airedale concerned in it somewhere,though its feet were startlingly white—changed hands and settled down into Mrs. Wilson's lap,where she fondled the weather-proof coat with rapture.

'Is it a boy or a girl?' she asked delicately.

'That dog? That dog's a boy.'

'It's a bitch,' said Tom decisively. 'Here's your money. Go and buy ten more dogs with it.'

We drove over to Fifth Avenue, warm and soft, almost pastoral, on the summer Sunday afternoon. I wouldn't have been surprised to see a great flock of white sheep turn the corner.

'Hold on,' I said, 'I have to leave you here.'

'No, you don't,' interposed Tom quickly. 'Myrtle'll be hurt if you don't come up to the apartment. Won't you, Myrtle?'

'Come on,' she urged. 'I'll telephone my sister Catherine. She's said to be very beautiful by people who ought to know.'

'Well, I'd like to, but —'

We went on, cutting back again over the Park toward the West Hundreds. At 158th Street the cab stopped at one slice in a long white cake of apartment-houses. Throwing a regal homecoming glance around the neighborhood, Mrs. Wilson gathered up her dog and her other purchases, and went haughtily in.

'I'm going to have the McKees come up,' she announced as we rose in the elevator. 'And, of course, I got to call up my sister, too.'

The apartment was on the top floor—a small living-room,a small dining-room,a small bedroom,and a bath. The living-room was crowded to the doors with a set of tapestried furniture entirely too large for it,so that to move about was to stumble continually over scenes of ladies swinging in the gardens of Versailles. The only picture was an over-enlarged photograph,apparently a hen sitting on a blurred rock. Looked at from a distance,however,the hen resolved itself into a bonnet,and the countenance of a stout old lady beamed down into the room. Several old copies of Town Tattle lay on the table together with a copy of Simon Called Peter,and some of the small scandal magazines of Broadway. Mrs.Wilson was first concerned with the dog. A reluctant elevator-boy went for a box full of straw and some milk,to which he added on his own initiative a tin of large,hard dog-biscuits—one of which decomposed apathetically in the saucer of milk all afternoon. Meanwhile Tom brought out a bottle of whiskey from a locked bureau door.

I have been drunk just twice in my life,and the second time was that afternoon;so everything that happened has a dim,hazy cast over it,although until after eight o'clock the apartment was full of cheerful sun. Sitting on Tom's lap Mrs.Wilson called up several people on the telephone;then there were no cigarettes,and I went out to buy some at the drugstore on the corner. When I came back they had both disappeared,so I sat down discreetly in the living-

room and read a chapter of Simon Called Peter—either it was terrible stuff or the whiskey distorted things,because it didn't make any sense to me.

Just as Tom and Myrtle (after the first drink Mrs.Wilson and I called each other by our first names) reappeared,company commenced to arrive at the apartment-door.

The sister,Catherine,was a slender,worldly girl of about thirty,with a solid,sticky bob of red hair,and a complexion powdered milky white. Her eyebrows had been plucked and then drawn on again at a more rakish angle,but the efforts of nature toward the restoration of the old alignment gave a blurred air to her face. When she moved about there was an incessant clicking as innumerable pottery bracelets jingled up and down upon her arms. She came in with such a proprietary haste,and looked around so possessively at the furniture that I wondered if she lived here. But when I asked her she laughed immoderately,repeated my question aloud,and told me she lived with a girl friend at a hotel.

Mr.McKee was a pale,feminine man from the flat below. He had just shaved,for there was a white spot of lather on his cheekbone,and he was most respectful in his greeting to every one in the room. He informed me that he was in the 'artistic game' ,and I gathered later that he was a photographer and had made the dim enlargement

of Mrs. Wilson's mother which hovered like an ectoplasm on the wall. His wife was shrill, languid, handsome, and horrible. She told me with pride that her husband had photographed her a hundred and twenty-seven times since they had been married.

Mrs. Wilson had changed her costume some time before, and was now attired in an elaborate afternoon dress of cream-colored chiffon, which gave out a continual rustle as she swept about the room. With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change. The intense vitality that had been so remarkable in the garage was converted into impressive hauteur. Her laughter, her gestures, her assertions became more violently affected moment by moment, and as she expanded the room grew smaller around her, until she seemed to be revolving on a noisy, creaking pivot through the smoky air.

'My dear,' she told her sister in a high, mincing shout, 'most of these fellas will cheat you every time. All they think of is money. I had a woman up here last week to look at my feet, and when she gave me the bill you'd of thought she had my appendicitis out.'

'What was the name of the woman?' asked Mrs. McKee.

'Mrs. Eberhardt. She goes around looking at people's feet in their own homes.'

'I like your dress,' remarked Mrs.McKee, 'I think it's adorable.'

Mrs.Wilson rejected the compliment by raising her eyebrow in disdain.

'It's just a crazy old thing,' she said. 'I just slip it on sometimes when I don't care what I look like.'

'But it looks wonderful on you,if you know what I mean,' pursued Mrs.McKee. 'If Chester could only get you in that pose I think he could make something of it.'

We all looked in silence at Mrs.Wilson,who removed a strand of hair from over her eyes and looked back at us with a brilliant smile. Mr.McKee regarded her intently with his head on one side,and then moved his hand back and forth slowly in front of his face.

'I should change the light,' he said after a moment. 'I'd like to bring out the modelling of the features. And I'd try to get hold of all the back hair.'

'I wouldn't think of changing the light,' cried Mrs. McKee. 'I think it's —'

Her husband said: 'Sh!' and we all looked at the subject again,whereupon Tom Buchanan yawned audibly and got to his feet.

'You McKees have something to drink,' he said. 'Get some more ice and mineral water, Myrtle, before everybody goes to sleep.'

'I told that boy about the ice.' Myrtle raised her eyebrows in despair at the shiftlessness of the lower orders. 'These people! You have to keep after them all the time.'

She looked at me and laughed pointlessly. Then she flounced over to the dog, kissed it with ecstasy, and swept into the kitchen, implying that a dozen chefs awaited her orders there.

'I've done some nice things out on Long Island,' asserted Mr. McKee.

Tom looked at him blankly.

'Two of them we have framed downstairs.'

'Two what?' demanded Tom.

'Two studies. One of them I call "Montauk Point—The Gulls," and the other I call "Montauk Point—The Sea".'

The sister Catherine sat down beside me on the couch.

'Do you live down on Long Island, too?' she inquired.

'I live at West Egg.'

'Really? I was down there at a party about a month ago. At a man named Gatsby's. Do you know him?'

'I live next door to him.'

'Well,they say he's a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm's. That's where all his money comes from.'

'Really?'

She nodded.

'I'm scared of him. I'd hate to have him get anything on me.'

This absorbing information about my neighbour was interrupted by Mrs.McKee's pointing suddenly at Catherine:

'Chester,I think you could do something with her,' she broke out,but Mr.McKee only nodded in a bored way,and turned his attention to Tom.

'I'd like to do more work on Long Island,if I could get the entry. All I ask is that they should give me a start.'

'Ask Myrtle,' said Tom,breaking into a short shout of laughter as Mrs.Wilson entered with a tray. 'She'll give you a letter of introduction,won't you,Myrtle?'

'Do what?' she asked,startled.

'You'll give McKee a letter of introduction to your husband,so he can do some studies of him.' His lips moved silently for a moment as he invented. "George B. Wilson at the Gasoline Pump," or something like that.'

Catherine leaned close to me and whispered in my ear:

'Neither of them can stand the person they're married to.'

'Can't they?'

'Can't stand them' She looked at Myrtle and then at Tom. 'What I say is,why go on living with them if they can't stand them? If I was them I'd get a divorce and get married to each other right away.'

'Doesn't she like Wilson either?'

The answer to this was unexpected. It came from Myrtle,who had overheard the question,and it was violent and obscene.

'You see?' cried Catherine triumphantly. She lowered her voice again. 'It's really his wife that's keeping them apart. She's a Catholic,and they don't believe in divorce.'

Daisy was not a Catholic,and I was a little shocked at the elaborateness of the lie.

'When they do get married,' continued Catherine, 'they're going West to live for a while until it blows over.'

'It'd be more discreet to go to Europe.'

'Oh,do you like Europe?' she exclaimed surprisingly. 'I just got back from Monte Carlo.'

'Really.'

'Just last year. I went over there with another girl.'

'Stay long?'

'No,we just went to Monte Carlo and back. We went by way of Marseilles. We had over twelve hundred dollars when we started,but we got gyped out of it all in two days in the private rooms. We had an awful time getting back,I can tell you. God,how I hated that town!'

The late afternoon sky bloomed in the window for a moment like the blue honey of the Mediterranean—then the shrill voice of Mrs.McKee called me back into the room.

'I almost made a mistake,too,' she declared vigorously. 'I almost married a little kyke who'd been after me for years. I knew he was below me. Everybody kept saying to me: "Lucille,that man's way below you!" But if I hadn't met Chester,he'd of got me sure.'

'Yes, but listen,' said Myrtle Wilson, nodding her head up and down, 'at least you didn't marry him.'

'I know I didn't.'

'Well, I married him,' said Myrtle, ambiguously. 'And that's the difference between your case and mine.'

'Why did you, Myrtle?' demanded Catherine. 'Nobody forced you to.'

Myrtle considered.

'I married him because I thought he was a gentleman,' she said finally. 'I thought he knew something about breeding, but he wasn't fit to lick my shoe.'

'You were crazy about him for a while,' said Catherine.

'Crazy about him!' cried Myrtle incredulously. 'Who said I was crazy about him? I never was any more crazy about him than I was about that man there.'

She pointed suddenly at me, and every one looked at me accusingly. I tried to show by my expression that I had expected no affection.

'The only crazy I was was when I married him. I knew right away I made a mistake. He borrowed somebody's best suit to get married

in, and never even told me about it, and the man came after it one day when he was out: "Oh, is that your suit?" I said. "This is the first I ever heard about it." But I gave it to him and then I lay down and cried to beat the band all afternoon.'

'She really ought to get away from him,' resumed Catherine to me. 'They've been living over that garage for eleven years. And Tom's the first sweetie she ever had.'

The bottle of whiskey—a second one—was now in constant demand by all present, excepting Catherine, who 'felt just as good on nothing at all.' Tom rang for the janitor and sent him for some celebrated sandwiches, which were a complete supper in themselves. I wanted to get out and walk eastward toward the park through the soft twilight, but each time I tried to go I became entangled in some wild, strident argument which pulled me back, as if with ropes, into my chair. Yet high over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I saw him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.

Myrtle pulled her chair close to mine, and suddenly her warm breath poured over me the story of her first meeting with Tom.

'It was on the two little seats facing each other that are always

the last ones left on the train. I was going up to New York to see my sister and spend the night. He had on a dress suit and patent leather shoes, and I couldn't keep my eyes off him, but every time he looked at me I had to pretend to be looking at the advertisement over his head. When we came into the station he was next to me, and his white shirt-front pressed against my arm, and so I told him I'd have to call a policeman, but he knew I lied. I was so excited that when I got into a taxi with him I didn't hardly know I wasn't getting into a subway train. All I kept thinking about, over and over, was "You can't live forever, you can't live forever." '

She turned to Mrs. McKee and the room rang full of her artificial laughter.

'My dear,' she cried, 'I'm going to give you this dress as soon as I'm through with it. I've got to get another one to-morrow. I'm going to make a list of all the things I've got to get. A massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ash-trays where you touch a spring, and a wreath with a black silk bow for mother's grave that'll last all summer. I got to write down a list so I won't forget all the things I got to do.'

It was nine o'clock—almost immediately afterward I looked at my watch and found it was ten. Mr. McKee was asleep on a chair with his fists clenched in his lap, like a photograph of a man of action.

Taking out my handkerchief I wiped from his cheek the spot of dried lather that had worried me all the afternoon.

The little dog was sitting on the table looking with blind eyes through the smoke, and from time to time groaning faintly. People disappeared, reappeared, made plans to go somewhere, and then lost each other, searched for each other, found each other a few feet away. Some time toward midnight Tom Buchanan and Mrs. Wilson stood face to face discussing, in impassioned voices, whether Mrs. Wilson had any right to mention Daisy's name.

‘Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!’ shouted Mrs. Wilson. ‘I’ll say it whenever I want to! Daisy! Dai —’

Making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand.

Then there were bloody towels upon the bathroom floor, and women's voices scolding, and high over the confusion a long broken wail of pain. Mr. McKee awoke from his doze and started in a daze toward the door. When he had gone half way he turned around and stared at the scene—his wife and Catherine scolding and consoling as they stumbled here and there among the crowded furniture with articles of aid, and the despairing figure on the couch, bleeding fluently, and trying to spread a copy of Town Tattle over the tapestry scenes of Versailles. Then Mr. McKee turned and continued on out the door.

Taking my hat from the chandelier,I followed.

'Come to lunch some day,' he suggested,as we groaned down in the elevator.

'Where?'

'Anywhere.'

'Keep your hands off the lever,' snapped the elevator boy.

'I beg your pardon,' said Mr.McKee with dignity, 'I didn't know I was touching it.'

'All right,' I agreed, 'I'll be glad to.'

... I was standing beside his bed and he was sitting up between the sheets,clad in his underwear,with a great portfolio in his hands.

'Beauty and the Beast ... Loneliness ... Old Grocery Horse ... Brook'n Bridge'

Then I was lying half asleep in the cold lower level of the Pennsylvania Station,staring at the morning Tribune,and waiting for the four o'clock train.

Chapter Three

There was music from my neighbour's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On weekends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb.

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with

several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors-d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece affair, but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors, and hair bobbed in strange new ways, and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile. The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter is easier minute by

minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath; already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the center of a group, and then, excited with triumph, glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and color under the constantly changing light.

Suddenly one of these gypsies, in trembling opal, seizes a cocktail out of the air, dumps it down for courage and, moving her hands like Frisco, dances out alone on the canvas platform. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly for her, and there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news goes around that she is Gilda Gray's understudy from the Follies. The party has begun.

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited—they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow they ended up at Gatsby's door. Once there they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with an amusement park. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission.

I had been actually invited. A chauffeur in a uniform of robin's-egg blue crossed my lawn early that Saturday morning with a surprisingly formal note from his employer: the honor would be entirely Gatsby's, it said, if I would attend his 'little party' that night. He had seen me several times, and had intended to call on me long before, but a peculiar combination of circumstances had prevented it—signed Jay Gatsby, in a majestic hand.

Dressed up in white flannels I went over to his lawn a little after seven, and wandered around rather ill at ease among swirls and eddies of people I didn't know—though here and there was a face I had noticed on the commuting train. I was immediately struck by the number of young Englishmen dotted about; all well dressed, all looking a little hungry, and all talking in low, earnest voices to solid and prosperous Americans. I was sure that they were selling something: bonds or insurance or automobiles. They were at least agonizingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a few words in the right key.

As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host, but the two or three people of whom I asked his whereabouts stared at me in such an amazed way, and denied so vehemently any knowledge of his movements, that I slunk off in the direction of the cocktail table—the only place in the garden where a single man could linger without looking purposeless and alone.

I was on my way to get roaring drunk from sheer embarrassment when Jordan Baker came out of the house and stood at the head of the marble steps, leaning a little backward and looking with contemptuous interest down into the garden.

Welcome or not, I found it necessary to attach myself to some one before I should begin to address cordial remarks to the passers-by.

'Hello!' I roared, advancing toward her. My voice seemed unnaturally loud across the garden.

'I thought you might be here,' she responded absently as I came up. 'I remembered you lived next door to —'

She held my hand impersonally, as a promise that she'd take care of me in a minute, and gave ear to two girls in twin yellow dresses, who stopped at the foot of the steps.

'Hello!' they cried together. 'Sorry you didn't win.'

That was for the golf tournament. She had lost in the finals the week before.

'You don't know who we are,' said one of the girls in yellow, 'but we met you here about a month ago.'

'You've dyed your hair since then,' remarked Jordan, and I started, but the girls had moved casually on and her remark was

addressed to the premature moon,produced like the supper,no doubt,out of a caterer's basket. With Jordan's slender golden arm resting in mine,we descended the steps and sauntered about the garden. A tray of cocktails floated at us through the twilight,and we sat down at a table with the two girls in yellow and three men,each one introduced to us as Mr. Mumble.

'Do you come to these parties often?' inquired Jordan of the girl beside her.

'The last one was the one I met you at,' answered the girl,in an alert confident voice. She turned to her companion: 'Wasn't it for you,Lucille?'

It was for Lucille,too.

'I like to come,' Lucille said. 'I never care what I do,so I always have a good time. When I was here last I tore my gown on a chair,and he asked me my name and address—inside of a week I got a package from Croirier's with a new evening gown in it.'

'Did you keep it?' asked Jordan.

'Sure I did. I was going to wear it to-night,but it was too big in the bust and had to be altered. It was gas blue with lavender beads. Two hundred and sixty-five dollars.'

'There's something funny about a fellow that'll do a thing like that,' said the other girl eagerly. 'He doesn't want any trouble with anybody.'

'Who doesn't?' I inquired.

'Gatsby. Somebody told me —'

The two girls and Jordan leaned together confidentially.

'Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once.'

A thrill passed over all of us. The three Mr.Mumbles bent forward and listened eagerly.

'I don't think it's so much that,' argued Lucille skeptically; 'it's more that he was a German spy during the war.'

One of the men nodded in confirmation.

'I heard that from a man who knew all about him,grew up with him in Germany,' he assured us positively.

'Oh,no,' said the first girl, 'it couldn't be that,because he was in the American army during the war.' As our credulity switched back to her she leaned forward with enthusiasm. 'You look at him sometimes when he thinks nobody's looking at him. I'll bet he killed a man.'

She narrowed her eyes and shivered. Lucille shivered. We all turned and looked around for Gatsby. It was testimony to the romantic speculation he inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world.

The first supper—there would be another one after midnight—was now being served, and Jordan invited me to join her own party, who were spread around a table on the other side of the garden. There were three married couples and Jordan's escort, a persistent undergraduate given to violent innuendo, and obviously under the impression that sooner or later Jordan was going to yield him up her person to a greater or lesser degree. Instead of rambling, this party had preserved a dignified homogeneity, and assumed to itself the function of representing the staid nobility of the countryside—East Egg condescending to West Egg and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gaiety.

'Let's get out,' whispered Jordan, after a somehow wasteful and inappropriate half-hour; 'this is much too polite for me.'

We got up, and she explained that we were going to find the host: I had never met him, she said, and it was making me uneasy. The undergraduate nodded in a cynical, melancholy way.

The bar, where we glanced first, was crowded, but Gatsby was not

there. She couldn't find him from the top of the steps, and he wasn't on the veranda. On a chance we tried an important-looking door, and walked into a high Gothic library, panelled with carved English Oak, and probably transported complete from some ruin overseas.

A stout, middle-aged man, with enormous owl-eyed spectacles, was sitting somewhat drunk on the edge of a great table, staring with unsteady concentration at the shelves of books. As we entered he wheeled excitedly around and examined Jordan from head to foot.

'What do you think?' he demanded impetuously.

'About what?'

He waved his hand toward the book-shelves.

'About that. As a matter of fact you needn't bother to ascertain. I ascertained. They're real.'

'The books?'

He nodded.

'Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they're absolutely real. Pages and—Here! Lemme show you.'

Taking our scepticism for granted,he rushed to the bookcases and returned with Volume One of the Stoddard Lectures.

'See!' he cried triumphantly. 'It's a bona-fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella's a regular Belasco. It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop,too—didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?'

He snatched the book from me and replaced it hastily on its shelf,muttering that if one brick was removed the whole library was liable to collapse.

'Who brought you?' he demanded. 'Or did you just come? I was brought. Most people were brought.'

Jordan looked at him alertly,cheerfully,without answering.

'I was brought by a woman named Roosevelt,' he continued.

'Mrs.Claud Roosevelt. Do you know her? I met her somewhere last night. I've been drunk for about a week now,and I thought it might sober me up to sit in a library.'

'Has it?'

'A little bit,I think. I can't tell yet. I've only been here an hour. Did I tell you about the books? They're real. They're —'

'You told us.'

We shook hands with him gravely and went back outdoors.

There was dancing now on the canvas in the garden; old men pushing young girls backward in eternal graceless circles, superior couples holding each other tortuously, fashionably, and keeping in the corners—and a great number of single girls dancing individualistically or relieving the orchestra for a moment of the burden of the banjo or the traps. By midnight the hilarity had increased. A celebrated tenor had sung in Italian, and a notorious contralto had sung in jazz, and between the numbers people were doing 'stunts' all over the garden, while happy, vacuous bursts of laughter rose toward the summer sky. A pair of stage twins, who turned out to be the girls in yellow, did a baby act in costume, and champagne was served in glasses bigger than finger-bowls. The moon had risen higher, and floating in the Sound was a triangle of silver scales, trembling a little to the stiff, tinny drip of the banjoes on the lawn.

I was still with Jordan Baker. We were sitting at a table with a man of about my age and a rowdy little girl, who gave way upon the slightest provocation to uncontrollable laughter. I was enjoying myself now. I had taken two finger-bowls of champagne, and the scene had changed before my eyes into something significant, elemental, and profound.

At a lull in the entertainment the man looked at me and smiled.

'Your face is familiar,' he said, politely. 'Weren't you in the First Division during the war?'

'Why, yes. I was in the Twenty-eighth Infantry.'

'I was in the Sixteenth until June nineteen-eighteen. I knew I'd seen you somewhere before.'

We talked for a moment about some wet, grey little villages in France. Evidently he lived in this vicinity, for he told me that he had just bought a hydroplane, and was going to try it out in the morning.

'Want to go with me, old sport? Just near the shore along the Sound.'

'What time?'

'Any time that suits you best.'

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask his name when Jordan looked around and smiled.

'Having a gay time now?' she inquired.

'Much better.' I turned again to my new acquaintance. 'This is an unusual party for me. I haven't even seen the host. I live over

there —' I waved my hand at the invisible hedge in the distance, 'and this man Gatsby sent over his chauffeur with an invitation.'

For a moment he looked at me as if he failed to understand.

'I'm Gatsby,' he said suddenly.

'What!' I exclaimed. 'Oh,I beg your pardon.'

'I thought you knew,old sport. I'm afraid I'm not a very good host.'

He smiled understandingly—much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it,that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole eternal world for an instant,and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood,believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself,and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that,at your best,you hoped to convey. Precisely at that point it vanished—and I was looking at an elegant young rough-neck,a year or two over thirty,whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care.

Almost at the moment when Mr.Gatsby identified himself a butler hurried toward him with the information that Chicago was calling him on the wire. He excused himself with a small bow that included each of us in turn.

'If you want anything just ask for it,old sport,' he urged me.

'Excuse me. I will rejoin you later.'

When he was gone I turned immediately to Jordan—constrained to assure her of my surprise. I had expected that Mr.Gatsby would be a florid and corpulent person in his middle years.

'Who is he?' I demanded. 'Do you know?'

'He's just a man named Gatsby.'

'Where is he from,I mean? And what does he do?'

'Now you're started on the subject,' she answered with a wan smile. 'Well,he told me once he was an Oxford man.'

A dim background started to take shape behind him,but at her next remark it faded away.

'However,I don't believe it.'

'Why not?'

'I don't know,' she insisted, 'I just don't think he went

there.'

Something in her tone reminded me of the other girl's 'I think he killed a man' ,and had the effect of stimulating my curiosity. I would have accepted without question the information that Gatsby sprang from the swamps of Louisiana or from the lower East Side of New York. That was comprehensible. But young men didn't—at least in my provincial inexperience I believed they didn't—drift coolly out of nowhere and buy a palace on Long Island Sound.

'Anyhow,he gives large parties,' said Jordan,changing the subject with an urban distaste for the concrete. 'And I like large parties. They're so intimate. At small parties there isn't any privacy.'

There was the boom of a bass drum,and the voice of the orchestra leader rang out suddenly above the echolalia of the garden.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' he cried. 'At the request of Mr.Gatsby we are going to play for you Mr.Vladimir Tostoff's latest work,which attracted so much attention at Carnegie Hall last May. If you read the papers you know there was a big sensation.' He smiled with jovial condescension,and added: 'Some sensation!' Whereupon everybody laughed.

'The piece is known,' he concluded lustily, 'as "Vladimir

Tostoff's Jazz History of the World" .'.

The nature of Mr.Tostoff's composition eluded me,because just as it began my eyes fell on Gatsby,standing alone on the marble steps and looking from one group to another with approving eyes. His tanned skin was drawn attractively tight on his face and his short hair looked as though it were trimmed every day. I could see nothing sinister about him. I wondered if the fact that he was not drinking helped to set him off from his guests,for it seemed to me that he grew more correct as the fraternal hilarity increased. When the 'Jazz History of the World' was over,girls were putting their heads on men's shoulders in a puppyish,convivial way,girls were swooning backward playfully into men's arms,even into groups,knowing that some one would arrest their falls—but no one swooned backward on Gatsby,and no French bob touched Gatsby's shoulder,and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby's head for one link.

'I beg your pardon.'

Gatsby's butler was suddenly standing beside us.

'Miss Baker?' he inquired. 'I beg your pardon,but Mr.Gatsby would like to speak to you alone.'

'With me?' she exclaimed in surprise.

'Yes, madame.'

She got up slowly, raising her eyebrows at me in astonishment, and followed the butler toward the house. I noticed that she wore her evening-dress, all her dresses, like sports clothes—there was a jauntiness about her movements as if she had first learned to walk upon golf courses on clean, crisp mornings.

I was alone and it was almost two. For some time confused and intriguing sounds had issued from a long, many-windowed room which overhung the terrace. Eluding Jordan's undergraduate, who was now engaged in an obstetrical conversation with two chorus girls, and who implored me to join him, I went inside.

The large room was full of people. One of the girls in yellow was playing the piano, and beside her stood a tall, red-haired young lady from a famous chorus, engaged in song. She had drunk a quantity of champagne, and during the course of her song she had decided, ineptly, that everything was very, very sad—she was not only singing, she was weeping too. Whenever there was a pause in the song she filled it with gasping, broken sobs, and then took up the lyric again in a quavering soprano. The tears coursed down her cheeks—not freely, however, for when they came into contact with her heavily beaded eyelashes they assumed an inky color, and pursued the rest of their way in slow black rivulets. A humorous suggestion was made

that she sing the notes on her face,whereupon she threw up her hands,sank into a chair,and went off into a deep vinous sleep.

'She had a fight with a man who says he's her husband,' explained a girl at my elbow.

I looked around. Most of the remaining women were now having fights with men said to be their husbands. Even Jordan's party,the quartet from East Egg,were rent asunder by dissension. One of the men was talking with curious intensity to a young actress,and his wife,after attempting to laugh at the situation in a dignified and indifferent way,broke down entirely and resorted to flank attacks—at intervals she appeared suddenly at his side like an angry diamond,and hissed: 'You promised!' into his ear.

The reluctance to go home was not confined to wayward men. The hall was at present occupied by two deplorably sober men and their highly indignant wives. The wives were sympathizing with each other in slightly raised voices.

'Whenever he sees I'm having a good time he wants to go home.'

'Never heard anything so selfish in my life.'

'We're always the first ones to leave.'

'So are we.'

'Well,we're almost the last to-night,' said one of the men sheepishly. 'The orchestra left half an hour ago.'

In spite of the wives' agreement that such malevolence was beyond credibility,the dispute ended in a short struggle,and both wives were lifted,kicking,into the night.

As I waited for my hat in the hall the door of the library opened and Jordan Baker and Gatsby came out together. He was saying some last word to her,but the eagerness in his manner tightened abruptly into formality as several people approached him to say good-bye.

Jordan's party were calling impatiently to her from the porch,but she lingered for a moment to shake hands.

'I've just heard the most amazing thing,' she whispered. 'How long were we in there?'

'Why,about an hour.'

'It was ... simply amazing,' she repeated abstractedly. 'But I swore I wouldn't tell it and here I am tantalizing you.' She yawned gracefully in my face. 'Please come and see me ... Phone book ... Under the name of Mrs. Sigourney Howard ... My aunt ... ' She was hurrying off as she talked—her brown hand waved a jaunty salute as she melted into her party at the door.

Rather ashamed that on my first appearance I had stayed so late,I joined the last of Gatsby's guests,who were clustered around him. I wanted to explain that I'd hunted for him early in the evening and to apologize for not having known him in the garden.

'Don't mention it,' he enjoined me eagerly. 'Don't give it another thought,old sport.' The familiar expression held no more familiarity than the hand which reassuringly brushed my shoulder.

'And don't forget we're going up in the hydroplane to-morrow morning,at nine o'clock.'

Then the butler,behind his shoulder:

'Philadelphia wants you on the ' phone,sir.'

'All right,in a minute. Tell them I'll be right there ... Good night.'

'Good night.'

'Good night.' He smiled—and suddenly there seemed to be a pleasant significance in having been among the last to go,as if he had desired it all the time. 'Good night,old sport ... Good night.'

But as I walked down the steps I saw that the evening was not quite over. Fifty feet from the door a dozen headlights illuminated a

bizarre and tumultuous scene. In the ditch beside the road, right side up, but violently shorn of one wheel, rested a new coupé which had left Gatsby's drive not two minutes before. The sharp jut of a wall accounted for the detachment of the wheel, which was now getting considerable attention from half a dozen curious chauffeurs. However, as they had left their cars blocking the road, a harsh, discordant din from those in the rear had been audible for some time, and added to the already violent confusion of the scene.

A man in a long duster had dismounted from the wreck and now stood in the middle of the road, looking from the car to the tyre and from the tyre to the observers in a pleasant, puzzled way.

'See!' he explained. 'It went in the ditch.'

The fact was infinitely astonishing to him, and I recognized first the unusual quality of wonder, and then the man—it was the late patron of Gatsby's library.

'How'd it happen?'

He shrugged his shoulders.

'I know nothing whatever about mechanics,' he said decisively.

'But how did it happen? Did you run into the wall?'

'Don't ask me,' said Owl Eyes, washing his hands of the whole

matter. 'I know very little about driving—next to nothing. It happened, and that's all I know.'

'Well, if you're a poor driver you oughtn't to try driving at night.'

'But I wasn't even trying,' he explained indignantly, 'I wasn't even trying.'

An awed hush fell upon the bystanders.

'Do you want to commit suicide?'

'You're lucky it was just a wheel! A bad driver and not even trying!'

'You don't understand,' explained the criminal. 'I wasn't driving. There's another man in the car.'

The shock that followed this declaration found voice in a sustained

'Ah-h-h!' as the door of the coupé swung slowly open. The crowd—it was now a crowd—stepped back involuntarily, and when the door had opened wide there was a ghostly pause. Then, very gradually, part by part, a pale, dangling individual stepped out of the wreck, pawing tentatively at the ground with a large uncertain dancing shoe.

Blinded by the glare of the headlights and confused by the incessant groaning of the horns, the apparition stood swaying for a

moment before he perceived the man in the duster.

'Wha's matter?' he inquired calmly. 'Did we run outa gas?'

'Look!'

Half a dozen fingers pointed at the amputated wheel—he stared at it for a moment, and then looked upward as though he suspected that it had dropped from the sky.

'It came off,' someone explained.

He nodded.

'At first I din' notice we'd stopped.'

A pause. Then, taking a long breath and straightening his shoulders, he remarked in a determined voice:

'Wonder'ff tell me where there's a gas'line station?'

At least a dozen men, some of them a little better off than he was, explained to him that wheel and car were no longer joined by any physical bond.

'Back out,' he suggested after a moment. 'Put her in reverse.'

'But the wheel's off!'

He hesitated.

'No harm in trying,' he said.

The caterwauling horns had reached a crescendo and I turned away and cut across the lawn toward home. I glanced back once. A wafer of a moon was shining over Gatsby's house, making the night fine as before, and surviving the laughter and the sound of his still glowing garden. A sudden emptiness seemed to flow now from the windows and the great doors, endowing with complete isolation the figure of the host, who stood on the porch, his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell.

*

Reading over what I have written so far, I see I have given the impression that the events of three nights several weeks apart were all that absorbed me. On the contrary, they were merely casual events in a crowded summer, and, until much later, they absorbed me infinitely less than my personal affairs.

Most of the time I worked. In the early morning the sun threw my shadow westward as I hurried down the white chasms of lower New York to the Probity Trust. I knew the other clerks and young bond-salesmen by their first names, and lunched with them in dark, crowded restaurants on little pig sausages and mashed potatoes and coffee. I even had a short affair with a girl who lived in Jersey City and worked in the accounting department, but her brother began throwing

mean looks in my direction,so when she went on her vacation in July I let it blow quietly away.

I took dinner usually at the Yale Club—for some reason it was the gloomiest event of my day—and then I went upstairs to the library and studied investments and securities for a conscientious hour. There were generally a few rioters around,but they never came into the library,so it was a good place to work. After that,if the night was mellow,I strolled down Madison Avenue past the old Murray Hill Hotel,and over 33rd Street to the Pennsylvania Station.

I began to like New York,the racy,adventurous feel of it at night,and the satisfaction that the constant flicker of men and women and machines gives to the restless eye. I liked to walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter into their lives,and no one would ever know or disapprove. Sometimes,in my mind,I followed them to their apartments on the corners of hidden streets,and they turned and smiled back at me before they faded through a door into warm darkness. At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes,and felt it in others—poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner—young clerks in the dusk,wasting the most poignant moments of night and life.

Again at eight o'clock,when the dark lanes of the Forties were lined five deep with throbbing taxicabs,bound for the theatre district,I felt a sinking in my heart. Forms leaned together in the taxis as they waited,and voices sang,and there was laughter from unheard jokes,and lighted cigarettes made unintelligible gestures inside. Imagining that I,too,was hurrying toward gaiety and sharing their intimate excitement,I wished them well.

For a while I lost sight of Jordan Baker,and then in midsummer I found her again. At first I was flattered to go places with her,because she was a golf champion,and everyone knew her name. Then it was something more. I wasn't actually in love,but I felt a sort of tender curiosity. The bored haughty face that she turned to the world concealed something—most affectations conceal something eventually,even though they don't in the beginning—and one day I found what it was. When we were on a house-party together up in Warwick,she left a borrowed car out in the rain with the top down,and then lied about it—and suddenly I remembered the story about her that had eluded me that night at Daisy's. At her first big golf tournament there was a row that nearly reached the newspapers—a suggestion that she had moved her ball from a bad lie in the semi-final round. The thing approached the proportions of a scandal—then died away. A caddy retracted his statement,and the only other witness admitted that he might have been mistaken. The

incident and the name had remained together in my mind.

Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever, shrewd men, and now I saw that this was because she felt safer on a plane where any divergence from a code would be thought impossible. She was incurably dishonest. She wasn't able to endure being at a disadvantage and, given this unwillingness, I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool, insolent smile turned to the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard, jaunty body.

It made no difference to me. Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply—I was casually sorry, and then I forgot. It was on that same house party that we had a curious conversation about driving a car. It started because she passed so close to some workmen that our fender flicked a button on one man's coat.

'You're a rotten driver,' I protested. 'Either you ought to be more careful, or you oughtn't to drive at all.'

'I am careful.'

'No, you're not.'

'Well, other people are,' she said lightly.

'What's that got to do with it?'

'They'll keep out of my way,' she insisted. 'It takes two to make an accident.'

'Suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself.'

'I hope I never will,' she answered. 'I hate careless people. That's why I like you.'

Her grey, sun-strained eyes stared straight ahead, but she had deliberately shifted our relations, and for a moment I thought I loved her. But I am slow-thinking and full of interior rules that act as brakes on my desires, and I knew that first I had to get myself definitely out of that tangle back home. I'd been writing letters once a week and signing them: 'Love, Nick,' and all I could think of was how, when that certain girl played tennis, a faint moustache of perspiration appeared on her upper lip. Nevertheless there was a vague understanding that had to be tactfully broken off before I was free.

Every one suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known.

Chapter Four

On Sunday morning while church bells rang in the villages alongshore, the world and its mistress returned to Gatsby's house and twinkled hilariously on his lawn.

'He's a bootlegger,' said the young ladies, moving somewhere between his cocktails and his flowers. 'One time he killed a man who had found out that he was nephew to Von Hindenburg and second cousin to the devil. Reach me a rose, honey, and pour me a last drop into that there crystal glass.'

Once I wrote down on the empty spaces of a time-table the names of those who came to Gatsby's house that summer. It is an old time-table now, disintegrating at its folds, and headed 'This schedule in effect July 5th, 1922.' But I can still read the grey names, and they will give you a better impression than my generalities of those who accepted Gatsby's hospitality and paid him the subtle tribute of knowing nothing whatever about him.

From East Egg, then, came the Chester Beckers and the Leeches, and a man named Bunsen, whom I knew at Yale, and Doctor Webster Civeaux, who was drowned last summer up in Maine. And the Hornbeams and the Willie Voltaires, and a whole clan named Blackbuck, who always gathered in a corner and flipped up their noses like goats at

whosoever came near. And the Ismays and the Chrysties (or rather Hubert Auerbach and Mr. Chrystie's wife) and Edgar Beaver, whose hair, they say, turned cotton-white one winter afternoon for no good reason at all.

Clarence Endive was from East Egg, as I remember. He came only once, in white knickerbockers, and had a fight with a bum named Etty in the garden. From farther out on the Island came the Cheadles and the O.R.P. Schraeders, and the Stonewall Jackson Abrams of Georgia, and the Fishguards and the Ripley Snells. Snell was there three days before he went to the penitentiary, so drunk out on the gravel drive that Mrs. Ulysses Swett's automobile ran over his right hand. The Dancies came, too, and S.B. Whitebait, who was well over sixty, and Maurice A. Flink, and the Hammerheads, and Beluga the tobacco importer, and Beluga's girls.

From West Egg came the Poles and the Mulreadys and Cecil Roebuck and Cecil Schoen and Gulick the State senator and Newton Orchid, who controlled Films Par Excellence, and Eckhaust and Clyde Cohen and Don S. Schwartz (the son) and Arthur McCarty, all connected with the movies in one way or another. And the Catlips and the Bembergs and G. Earl Muldoon, brother to that Muldoon who afterward strangled his wife. Da Fontano the promoter came there, and Ed Legros and James B. ('Rot-Gut') Ferret and the De Jongs and Ernest Lilly—they came to gamble, and when Ferret wandered into the garden it

meant he was cleaned out and Associated Traction would have to fluctuate profitably next day.

A man named Klipspringer was there so often and so long that he became known as 'the boarder' —I doubt if he had any other home. Of theatrical people there were Gus Waize and Horace O'Donavan and Lester Myer and George Duckweed and Francis Bull. Also from New York were the Chromes and the Backhyssons and the Dennickers and Russel Betty and the Corriganes and the Kellehers and the Dewars and the Scullys and S.W.Belcher and the Smirkes and the young Quinns,divorced now,and Henry L.Palmetto,who killed himself by jumping in front of a subway train in Times Square.

Benny McClenahan arrived always with four girls. They were never quite the same ones in physical person,but they were so identical one with another that it inevitably seemed they had been there before. I have forgotten their names—Jaqueline,I think,or else Consuela,or Gloria or Judy or June,and their last names were either the melodious names of flowers and months or the sterner ones of the great American capitalists whose cousins,if pressed,they would confess themselves to be.

In addition to all these I can remember that Faustina O'Brien came there at least once and the Baedeker girls and young Brewer,who had his nose shot off in the war,and Mr.Albrucksburger and Miss

Haag, his fiancée, and Ardita Fitz-Peters, and Mr. P. Jewett, once head of the American Legion, and Miss Claudia Hip, with a man reputed to be her chauffeur, and a prince of something, whom we called Duke, and whose name, if I ever knew it, I have forgotten.

All these people came to Gatsby's house in the summer.

*

At nine o'clock, one morning late in July, Gatsby's gorgeous car lurched up the rocky drive to my door and gave out a burst of melody from its three-noted horn. It was the first time he had called on me, though I had gone to two of his parties, mounted in his hydroplane, and, at his urgent invitation, made frequent use of his beach.

'Good morning, old sport. You're having lunch with me to-day and I thought we'd ride up together.'

He was balancing himself on the dashboard of his car with that resourcefulness of movement that is so peculiarly American—that comes, I suppose, with the absence of lifting work in youth and, even more, with the formless grace of our nervous, sporadic games. This quality was continually breaking through his punctilious manner in the shape of restlessness. He was never quite still; there was always a tapping foot somewhere or the impatient opening and

closing of a hand.

He saw me looking with admiration at his car.

'It's pretty, isn't it, old sport.' He jumped off to give me a better view. 'Haven't you ever seen it before?'

I'd seen it. Everybody had seen it. It was a rich cream color, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hat-boxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrored a dozen suns. Sitting down behind many layers of glass in a sort of green leather conservatory, we started to town.

I had talked with him perhaps half a dozen times in the past month and found, to my disappointment, that he had little to say. So my first impression, that he was a person of some undefined consequence, had gradually faded and he had become simply the proprietor of an elaborate road-house next door.

And then came that disconcerting ride. We hadn't reached West Egg Village before Gatsby began leaving his elegant sentences unfinished and slapping himself indecisively on the knee of his caramel-colored suit.

'Look here, old sport,' he broke out surprisingly. 'What's your opinion of me, anyhow?'

A little overwhelmed,I began the generalized evasions which that question deserves.

‘Well,I'm going to tell you something about my life,’ he interrupted. ‘I don't want you to get a wrong idea of me from all these stories you hear.’

So he was aware of the bizarre accusations that flavored conversation in his halls.

‘I'll tell you God's truth.’ His right hand suddenly ordered divine retribution to stand by. ‘I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West—all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford,because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.’

He looked at me sideways—and I knew why Jordan Baker had believed he was lying. He hurried the phrase ‘educated at Oxford,’ or swallowed it,or choked on it,as though it had bothered him before. And with this doubt,his whole statement fell to pieces,and I wondered if there wasn't something a little sinister about him,after all.

‘What part of the Middle West?’ I inquired casually.

‘San Francisco.’

'I see.'

'My family all died and I came into a good deal of money.'

His voice was solemn, as if the memory of that sudden extinction of a clan still haunted him. For a moment I suspected that he was pulling my leg, but a glance at him convinced me otherwise.

'After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe—Paris, Venice, Rome—collecting jewels, chiefly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little, things for myself only, and trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me long ago.'

With an effort I managed to restrain my incredulous laughter. The very phrases were worn so threadbare that they evoked no image except that of a turbaned 'character' leaking sawdust at every pore as he pursued a tiger through the Bois de Boulogne.

'Then came the war, old sport. It was a great relief and I tried very hard to die, but I seemed to bear an enchanted life. I accepted a commission as first lieutenant when it began. In the Argonne Forest I took the remains of my machine-gun battalion so far forward that there was a half mile gap on either side of us where the infantry couldn't advance. We stayed there two days and two nights, a hundred and thirty men with sixteen Lewis guns, and when the infantry came up at last they found the insignia of three

German divisions among the piles of dead. I was promoted to be a major, and every Allied government gave me a decoration—even Montenegro, little Montenegro down on the Adriatic Sea!’

Little Montenegro! He lifted up the words and nodded at them—with his smile. The smile comprehended Montenegro's troubled history and sympathized with the brave struggles of the Montenegrin people. It appreciated fully the chain of national circumstances which had elicited this tribute from Montenegro's warm little heart. My incredulity was submerged in fascination now; it was like skimming hastily through a dozen magazines.

He reached in his pocket, and a piece of metal, slung on a ribbon, fell into my palm.

‘That's the one from Montenegro.’

To my astonishment, the thing had an authentic look. ‘Orderi di Danilo’ , ran the circular legend, ‘Montenegro, Nicolas Rex’ .

‘Turn it.’

‘Major Jay Gatsby’ , I read, ‘For Valour Extraordinary’ .

‘Here's another thing I always carry. A souvenir of Oxford days. It was taken in Trinity Quad—the man on my left is now the Earl of Doncaster.’

It was a photograph of half a dozen young men in blazers loafing in an archway through which were visible a host of spires. There was Gatsby, looking a little, not much, younger—with a cricket bat in his hand.

Then it was all true. I saw the skins of tigers flaming in his palace on the Grand Canal; I saw him opening a chest of rubies to ease, with their crimson-lighted depths, the gnawings of his broken heart.

'I'm going to make a big request of you to-day,' he said, pocketing his souvenirs with satisfaction, 'so I thought you ought to know something about me. I didn't want you to think I was just some nobody. You see, I usually find myself among strangers because I drift here and there trying to forget the sad thing that happened to me.' He hesitated. 'You'll hear about it this afternoon.'

'At lunch?'

'No, this afternoon. I happened to find out that you're taking Miss Baker to tea.'

'Do you mean you're in love with Miss Baker?'

'No, old sport, I'm not. But Miss Baker has kindly consented to speak to you about this matter.'

I hadn't the faintest idea what 'this matter' was, but I was more annoyed than interested. I hadn't asked Jordan to tea in order to discuss Mr. Jay Gatsby. I was sure the request would be something utterly fantastic, and for a moment I was sorry I'd ever set foot upon his overpopulated lawn.

He wouldn't say another word. His correctness grew on him as we neared the city. We passed Port Roosevelt, where there was a glimpse of red-belted ocean-going ships, and sped along a cobbled slum lined with the dark, undeserted saloons of the faded-gilt nineteenth-hundreds. Then the valley of ashes opened out on both sides of us, and I had a glimpse of Mrs. Wilson straining at the garage pump with panting vitality as we went by.

With fenders spread like wings we scattered light through half Astoria—only half, for as we twisted among the pillars of the elevated I heard the familiar 'jug-jug-spat!' of a motorcycle, and a frantic policeman rode alongside.

'All right, old sport,' called Gatsby. We slowed down. Taking a white card from his wallet, he waved it before the man's eyes.

'Right you are,' agreed the policeman, tipping his cap. 'Know you next time, Mr. Gatsby. Excuse me!'

'What was that?' I inquired. 'The picture of Oxford?'

'I was able to do the commissioner a favor once, and he sends me a Christmas card every year.'

Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders making a constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money. The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.

A dead man passed us in a hearse heaped with blooms, followed by two carriages with drawn blinds, and by more cheerful carriages for friends. The friends looked out at us with the tragic eyes and short upper lips of south-eastern Europe, and I was glad that the sight of Gatsby's splendid car was included in their somber holiday. As we crossed Blackwell's Island a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry.

'Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge,' I thought; 'anything at all... .'

Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder.

*

Roaring noon. In a well-fanned Forty-second Street cellar I met Gatsby for lunch. Blinking away the brightness of the street outside, my eyes picked him out obscurely in the anteroom, talking to another man.

'Mr. Carraway, this is my friend Mr. Wolfshiem.'

A small, flat-nosed Jew raised his large head and regarded me with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril. After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half-darkness.

'— So I took one look at him,' said Mr. Wolfshiem, shaking my hand earnestly, 'and what do you think I did?'

'What?' I inquired politely.

But evidently he was not addressing me, for he dropped my hand and covered Gatsby with his expressive nose.

'I handed the money to Katspaugh and I said: "All right, Katspaugh, don't pay him a penny till he shuts his mouth." He shut it then and there.'

Gatsby took an arm of each of us and moved forward into the restaurant, whereupon Mr. Wolfshiem swallowed a new sentence he was starting and lapsed into a somnambulatory abstraction.

'Highballs?' asked the head waiter.

'This is a nice restaurant here,' said Mr.Wolfshiem,looking at the Presbyterian nymphs on the ceiling. 'But I like across the street better!'

'Yes,highballs,' agreed Gatsby,and then to Mr. Wolfshiem: 'It's too hot over there.'

'Hot and small—yes,' said Mr.Wolfshiem, 'but full of memories.'

'What place is that?' I asked.

'The old Metropole.'

'The old Metropole,' brooded Mr.Wolfshiem gloomily. 'Filled with faces dead and gone. Filled with friends gone now forever. I can't forget so long as I live the night they shot Rosy Rosenthal there. It was six of us at the table,and Rosy had eat and drunk a lot all evening. When it was almost morning the waiter came up to him with a funny look and says somebody wants to speak to him outside. "All right," says Rosy,and begins to get up,and I pulled him down in his chair.'

' "Let the bastards come in here if they want you,Rosy,but don't you,so help me,move outside this room."

'It was four o'clock in the morning then,and if we'd of raised the blinds we'd of seen daylight.'

'Did he go?' I asked innocently.

'Sure he went.' Mr.Wolfshiem's nose flashed at me indignantly.

'He turned around in the door and says: "Don't let that waiter take away my coffee!" Then he went out on the sidewalk and they shot him three times in his full belly and drove away.'

'Four of them were electrocuted,' I said,remembering.

'Five,with Becker.' His nostrils turned to me in an interested way. 'I understand you're looking for a business gonnection.'

The juxtaposition of these two remarks was startling. Gatsby answered for me:

'Oh,no,' he exclaimed, 'this isn't the man.'

'No?' Mr.Wolfshiem seemed disappointed.

'This is just a friend. I told you we'd talk about that some other time.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Mr.Wolfshiem, 'I had a wrong man.'

A succulent hash arrived,and Mr.Wolfshiem,forgetting the more sentimental atmosphere of the old Metropole,began to eat with ferocious delicacy. His eyes,meanwhile,roved very slowly all around the room—he completed the arc by turning to inspect the people

directly behind. I think that, except for my presence, he would have taken one short glance beneath our own table.

'Look here, old sport,' said Gatsby, leaning toward me, 'I'm afraid I made you a little angry this morning in the car.'

There was the smile again, but this time I held out against it.

'I don't like mysteries,' I answered, 'and I don't understand why you won't come out frankly and tell me what you want. Why has it all got to come through Miss Baker?'

'Oh, it's nothing underhand,' he assured me. 'Miss Baker's a great sportswoman, you know, and she'd never do anything that wasn't all right.'

Suddenly he looked at his watch, jumped up, and hurried from the room, leaving me with Mr. Wolfshiem at the table.

'He has to telephone,' said Mr. Wolfshiem, following him with his eyes. 'Fine fellow, isn't he? Handsome to look at and a perfect gentleman.'

'Yes.'

'He's an Oggsford man.'

'Oh!'

'He went to Oggsford College in England. You know Oggsford College?'

'I've heard of it.'

'It's one of the most famous colleges in the world.'

'Have you known Gatsby for a long time?' I inquired.

'Several years,' he answered in a gratified way. 'I made the pleasure of his acquaintance just after the war. But I knew I had discovered a man of fine breeding after I talked with him an hour. I said to myself: "There's the kind of man you'd like to take home and introduce to your mother and sister." ' He paused. 'I see you're looking at my cuff buttons.'

I hadn't been looking at them, but I did now. They were composed of oddly familiar pieces of ivory.

'Finest specimens of human molars,' he informed me.

'Well!' I inspected them. 'That's a very interesting idea.'

'Yeah.' He flipped his sleeves up under his coat. 'Yeah, Gatsby's very careful about women. He would never so much as look at a friend's wife.'

When the subject of this instinctive trust returned to the table

and sat down Mr. Wolfshiem drank his coffee with a jerk and got to his feet.

'I have enjoyed my lunch,' he said, 'and I'm going to run off from you two young men before I outstay my welcome.'

'Don't hurry, Meyer,' said Gatsby, without enthusiasm. Mr. Wolfshiem raised his hand in a sort of benediction.

'You're very polite, but I belong to another generation,' he announced solemnly. 'You sit here and discuss your sports and your young ladies and your —' He supplied an imaginary noun with another wave of his hand. 'As for me, I am fifty years old, and I won't impose myself on you any longer.'

As he shook hands and turned away his tragic nose was trembling. I wondered if I had said anything to offend him.

'He becomes very sentimental sometimes,' explained Gatsby. 'This is one of his sentimental days. He's quite a character around New York—a denizen of Broadway.'

'Who is he, anyhow, an actor?'

'No.'

'A dentist?'

'Meyer Wolfshiem? No, he's a gambler.' Gatsby hesitated, then added coolly: 'He's the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919.'

'Fixed the World's Series?' I repeated.

The idea staggered me. I remembered, of course, that the World's Series had been fixed in 1919, but if I had thought of it at all I would have thought of it as a thing that merely happened, the end of some inevitable chain. It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people—with the single-mindedness of a burglar blowing a safe.

'How did he happen to do that?' I asked after a minute.

'He just saw the opportunity.'

'Why isn't he in jail?'

'They can't get him, old sport. He's a smart man.'

I insisted on paying the check. As the waiter brought my change I caught sight of Tom Buchanan across the crowded room.

'Come along with me for a minute,' I said; 'I've got to say hello to someone.'

When he saw us Tom jumped up and took half a dozen steps in our direction.

'Where've you been?' he demanded eagerly. 'Daisy's furious because you haven't called up.'

'This is Mr.Gatsby,Mr.Buchanan.'

They shook hands briefly,and a strained,unfamiliar look of embarrassment came over Gatsby's face.

'How've you been,anyhow?' demanded Tom of me. 'How'd you happen to come up this far to eat?'

'I've been having lunch with Mr.Gatsby.'

I turned toward Mr.Gatsby,but he was no longer there.

*

One October day in nineteen-seventeen —

(said Jordan Baker that afternoon,sitting up very straight on a straight chair in the tea-garden at the Plaza Hotel)

—I was walking along from one place to another, half on the sidewalks and half on the lawns. I was happier on the lawns because I had on shoes from England with rubber nobs on the soles that bit into the soft ground. I had on a new plaid skirt also that blew a little in the wind,and whenever this happened the red,white,and blue banners in front of all the houses stretched out stiff and

said tut-tut-tut-tut,in a disapproving way.

The largest of the banners and the largest of the lawns belonged to Daisy Fay's house. She was just eighteen,two years older than me,and by far the most popular of all the young girls in Louisville. She dressed in white,and had a little white roadster,and all day long the telephone rang in her house and excited young officers from Camp Taylor demanded the privilege of monopolizing her that night. 'Anyways,for an hour!'

When I came opposite her house that morning her white roadster was beside the curb,and she was sitting in it with a lieutenant I had never seen before. They were so engrossed in each other that she didn't see me until I was five feet away.

'Hello,Jordan,' she called unexpectedly. 'Please come here.'

I was flattered that she wanted to speak to me,because of all the older girls I admired her most. She asked me if I was going to the Red Cross and make bandages. I was. Well,then,would I tell them that she couldn't come that day? The officer looked at Daisy while she was speaking,in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at sometime,and because it seemed romantic to me I have remembered the incident ever since. His name was Jay Gatsby,and I didn't lay eyes on him again for over four years—even after I'd met him on Long Island I didn't realize it was the same man.

That was nineteen-seventeen. By the next year I had a few beaux myself, and I began to play in tournaments, so I didn't see Daisy very often. She went with a slightly older crowd—when she went with anyone at all. Wild rumours were circulating about her—how her mother had found her packing her bag one winter night to go to New York and say good-bye to a soldier who was going overseas. She was effectually prevented, but she wasn't on speaking terms with her family for several weeks. After that she didn't play around with the soldiers any more, but only with a few flat-footed, short-sighted young men in town, who couldn't get into the army at all.

By the next autumn she was gay again, gay as ever. She had a début after the armistice, and in February she was presumably engaged to a man from New Orleans. In June she married Tom Buchanan of Chicago, with more pomp and circumstance than Louisville ever knew before. He came down with a hundred people in four private cars, and hired a whole floor of the Muhlbach Hotel, and the day before the wedding he gave her a string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

I was a bridesmaid. I came into her room half an hour before the bridal dinner, and found her lying on her bed as lovely as the June night in her flowered dress—and as drunk as a monkey. She had a bottle of Sauterne in one hand and a letter in the other.

'Gratulate me,' she muttered. 'Never had a drink before, but oh how I do enjoy it.'

'What's the matter, Daisy?'

I was scared, I can tell you; I'd never seen a girl like that before.

'Here, deares' .' She groped around in a waste-basket she had with her on the bed and pulled out the string of pearls. 'Take 'em downstairs and give 'em back to whoever they belong to. Tell 'em all Daisy's change' her mine. Say: "Daisy's change' her mine!" '

She began to cry—she cried and cried. I rushed out and found her mother's maid, and we locked the door and got her into a cold bath. She wouldn't let go of the letter. She took it into the tub with her and squeezed it up into a wet ball, and only let me leave it in the soap-dish when she saw that it was coming to pieces like snow.

But she didn't say another word. We gave her spirits of ammonia and put ice on her forehead and hooked her back into her dress, and half an hour later, when we walked out of the room, the pearls were around her neck and the incident was over. Next day at five o'clock she married Tom Buchanan without so much as a shiver, and started off on a three months' trip to the South Seas.

I saw them in Santa Barbara when they came back, and I thought I'd never seen a girl so mad about her husband. If he left the room for

a minute she'd look around uneasily, and say: 'Where's Tom gone?' and wear the most abstracted expression until she saw him coming in the door. She used to sit on the sand with his head in her lap by the hour, rubbing her fingers over his eyes and looking at him with unfathomable delight. It was touching to see them together—it made you laugh in a hushed, fascinated way. That was in August. A week after I left Santa Barbara Tom ran into a wagon on the Ventura road one night, and ripped a front wheel off his car. The girl who was with him got into the papers, too, because her arm was broken—she was one of the chambermaids in the Santa Barbara Hotel.

The next April Daisy had her little girl, and they went to France for a year. I saw them one spring in Cannes, and later in Deauville, and then they came back to Chicago to settle down. Daisy was popular in Chicago, as you know. They moved with a fast crowd, all of them young and rich and wild, but she came out with an absolutely perfect reputation. Perhaps because she doesn't drink. It's a great advantage not to drink among hard-drinking people. You can hold your tongue and, moreover, you can time any little irregularity of your own so that everybody else is so blind that they don't see or care. Perhaps Daisy never went in for amour at all—and yet there's something in that voice of hers ...

Well, about six weeks ago, she heard the name Gatsby for the first time in years. It was when I asked you—do you remember?—if you

knew Gatsby in West Egg. After you had gone home she came into my room and woke me up, and said: 'What Gatsby?' and when I described him—I was half asleep—she said in the strangest voice that it must be the man she used to know. It wasn't until then that I connected this Gatsby with the officer in her white car.

*

When Jordan Baker had finished telling all this we had left the Plaza for half an hour and were driving in a victoria through Central Park. The sun had gone down behind the tall apartments of the movie stars in the West Fifties, and the clear voices of children, already gathered like crickets on the grass, rose through the hot twilight:

'I'm the Sheik of Araby,

Your love belongs to me.

At night when you're asleep,

Into your tent I'll creep —'

'It was a strange coincidence,' I said.

'But it wasn't a coincidence at all.'

'Why not?'

'Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay.'

Then it had not been merely the stars to which he had aspired on that June night. He came alive to me, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor.

'He wants to know,' continued Jordan, 'if you'll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over.'

The modesty of the demand shook me. He had waited five years and bought a mansion where he dispensed starlight to casual moths—so that he could 'come over' some afternoon to a stranger's garden.

'Did I have to know all this before he could ask such a little thing?'

'He's afraid, he's waited so long. He thought you might be offended. You see, he's a regular tough underneath it all.'

Something worried me.

'Why didn't he ask you to arrange a meeting?'

'He wants her to see his house,' she explained. 'And your house is right next door.'

'Oh!'

'I think he half expected her to wander into one of his parties,some night,' went on Jordan, 'but she never did. Then he began asking people casually if they knew her,and I was the first one he found. It was that night he sent for me at his dance,and you should have heard the elaborate way he worked up to it. Of course,I immediately suggested a luncheon in New York—and I thought he'd go mad:

' "I don't want to do anything out of the way!" he kept saying.
"I want to see her right next door." '

'When I said you were a particular friend of Tom's,he started to abandon the whole idea. He doesn't know very much about Tom,though he says he's read a Chicago paper for years just on the chance of catching a glimpse of Daisy's name.'

It was dark now,and as we dipped under a little bridge I put my arm around Jordan's golden shoulder and drew her toward me and asked her to dinner. Suddenly I wasn't thinking of Daisy and Gatsby any more,but of this clean,hard,limited person,who dealt in universal skepticism,and who leaned back jauntily just within the circle of my arm. A phrase began to beat in my ears with a sort of heady excitement: 'There are only the pursued,the pursuing,the busy and the tired.'

'And Daisy ought to have something in her life,' murmured Jordan

to me.

'Does she want to see Gatsby?'

'She's not to know about it. Gatsby doesn't want her to know. You're just supposed to invite her to tea.'

We passed a barrier of dark trees, and then the facade of Fifty-ninth Street, a block of delicate pale light, beamed down into the park. Unlike Gatsby and Tom Buchanan, I had no girl whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs, and so I drew up the girl beside me, tightening my arms. Her wan, scornful mouth smiled, and so I drew her up again closer, this time to my face.

Chapter Five

When I came home to West Egg that night I was afraid for a moment that my house was on fire. Two o'clock and the whole corner of the peninsula was blazing with light, which fell unreal on the shrubbery and made thin elongating glints upon the roadside wires. Turning a corner, I saw that it was Gatsby's house, lit from tower to cellar.

At first I thought it was another party, a wild rout that had resolved itself into 'hide-and-go-seek' or 'sardines-in-the-box' with all the house thrown open to the game. But there wasn't a sound. Only wind in the trees, which blew the wires and made the lights go off and on again as if the house had winked into the darkness. As my taxi groaned away I saw Gatsby walking toward me across his lawn.

'Your place looks like the World's Fair,' I said.

'Does it?' He turned his eyes toward it absently. 'I have been glancing into some of the rooms. Let's go to Coney Island, old sport. In my car.'

'It's too late.'

'Well, suppose we take a plunge in the swimming pool? I haven't made use of it all summer.'

'I've got to go to bed.'

'All right.'

He waited, looking at me with suppressed eagerness.

'I talked with Miss Baker,' I said after a moment. 'I'm going to call up Daisy to-morrow and invite her over here to tea.'

'Oh, that's all right,' he said carelessly. 'I don't want to put you to any trouble.'

'What day would suit you?'

'What day would suit you?' he corrected me quickly. 'I don't want to put you to any trouble, you see.'

'How about the day after to-morrow?'

He considered for a moment. Then, with reluctance:

'I want to get the grass cut,' he said.

We both looked at the grass—there was a sharp line where my ragged lawn ended and the darker, well-kept expanse of his began. I suspected that he meant my grass.

'There's another little thing,' he said uncertainly, and hesitated.

'Would you rather put it off for a few days?' I asked.

'Oh, it isn't about that. At least —' He fumbled with a series of beginnings. 'Why, I thought—why, look here, old sport, you don't make much money, do you?'

'Not very much.'

This seemed to reassure him and he continued more confidently.

'I thought you didn't, if you'll pardon me—you see, I carry on a little business on the side, a sort of side line, you understand. And I thought that if you don't make very much—You're selling bonds, aren't you, old sport?'

'Trying to.'

'Well, this would interest you. It wouldn't take up much of your time and you might pick up a nice bit of money. It happens to be a rather confidential sort of thing.'

I realize now that under different circumstances that conversation might have been one of the crises of my life. But, because the offer was obviously and tactlessly for a service to be rendered, I had no choice except to cut him off there.

'I've got my hands full,' I said. 'I'm much obliged but I couldn't take on any more work.'

'You wouldn't have to do any business with Wolfshiem.' Evidently he thought that I was shying away from the 'gonnegtion' mentioned at lunch, but I assured him he was wrong. He waited a moment longer, hoping I'd begin a conversation, but I was too absorbed to be responsive, so he went unwillingly home.

The evening had made me light-headed and happy; I think I walked into a deep sleep as I entered my front door. So I don't know whether or not Gatsby went to Coney Island, or for how many hours he 'glanced into rooms' while his house blazed gaudily on. I called up Daisy from the office next morning, and invited her to come to tea.

'Don't bring Tom,' I warned her.

'What?'

'Don't bring Tom.'

'Who is "Tom"?' she asked innocently.

The day agreed upon was pouring rain. At eleven o'clock a man in a raincoat, dragging a lawn-mower, tapped at my front door and said that Mr. Gatsby had sent him over to cut my grass. This reminded me that I had forgotten to tell my Finn to come back, so I drove into West Egg Village to search for her among soggy whitewashed alleys and to buy some cups and lemons and flowers.

The flowers were unnecessary, for at two o'clock a greenhouse arrived from Gatsby's, with innumerable receptacles to contain it. An hour later the front door opened nervously, and Gatsby, in a white flannel suit, silver shirt, and gold-colored tie, hurried in. He was pale, and there were dark signs of sleeplessness beneath his eyes.

'Is everything all right?' he asked immediately.

'The grass looks fine, if that's what you mean.'

'What grass?' he inquired blankly. 'Oh, the grass in the yard.' He looked out the window at it, but, judging from his expression, I don't believe he saw a thing.

'Looks very good,' he remarked vaguely. 'One of the papers said they thought the rain would stop about four. I think it was The Journal. Have you got everything you need in the shape of—of tea?'

I took him into the pantry, where he looked a little reproachfully at the Finn. Together we scrutinized the twelve lemon cakes from the delicatessen shop.

'Will they do?' I asked.

'Of course, of course! They're fine!' and he added hollowly, '...old sport.'

The rain cooled about half-past three to a damp mist,through which occasional thin drops swam like dew. Gatsby looked with vacant eyes through a copy of Clay's Economics,starting at the Finnish tread that shook the kitchen floor,and peering toward the bleared windows from time to time as if a series of invisible but alarming happenings were taking place outside. Finally he got up and informed me,in an uncertain voice,that he was going home.

'Why's that?'

'Nobody's coming to tea. It's too late!' He looked at his watch as if there was some pressing demand on his time elsewhere. 'I can't wait all day.'

'Don't be silly;it's just two minutes to four.'

He sat down miserably,as if I had pushed him,and simultaneously there was the sound of a motor turning into my lane. We both jumped up,and,a little harrowed myself,I went out into the yard.

Under the dripping bare lilac-trees a large open car was coming up the drive. It stopped. Daisy's face,tipped sideways beneath a three-cornered lavender hat,looked out at me with a bright ecstatic smile.

'Is this absolutely where you live,my dearest one?'

The exhilarating ripple of her voice was a wild tonic in the rain. I had to follow the sound of it for a moment, up and down, with my ear alone, before any words came through. A damp streak of hair lay like a dash of blue paint across her cheek and her hand was wet with glistening drops as I took it to help her from the car.

'Are you in love with me,' she said low in my ear, 'or why did I have to come alone?'

'That's the secret of Castle Rackrent. Tell your chauffeur to go far away and spend an hour.'

'Come back in an hour, Ferdie.' Then in a grave murmur: 'His name is Ferdie.'

'Does the gasoline affect his nose?'

'I don't think so,' she said innocently. 'Why?'

We went in. To my overwhelming surprise the living-room was deserted.

'Well, that's funny,' I exclaimed.

'What's funny?'

She turned her head as there was a light dignified knocking at the front door. I went out and opened it. Gatsby, pale as death, with his

hands plunged like weights in his coat pockets,was standing in a puddle of water glaring tragically into my eyes.

With his hands still in his coat pockets he stalked by me into the hall,turned sharply as if he were on a wire,and disappeared into the living-room. It wasn't a bit funny. Aware of the loud beating of my own heart I pulled the door to against the increasing rain.

For half a minute there wasn't a sound. Then from the living room I heard a sort of choking murmur and part of a laugh,followed by Daisy's voice on a clear artificial note:

'I certainly am awfully glad to see you again.'

A pause;it endured horribly. I had nothing to do in the hall,so I went into the room.

Gatsby,his hands still in his pockets,was reclining against the mantelpiece in a strained counterfeit of perfect ease,even of boredom. His head leaned back so far that it rested against the face of a defunct mantelpiece clock,and from this position his distraught eyes stared down at Daisy,who was sitting,frightened but graceful,on the edge of a stiff chair.

'We've met before,' muttered Gatsby. His eyes glanced momentarily at me,and his lips parted with an abortive attempt at a laugh. Luckily the clock took this moment to tilt dangerously at the

pressure of his head,whereupon he turned and caught it with trembling fingers,and set it back in place. Then he sat down,rigidly,his elbow on the arm of the sofa and his chin in his hand.

'I'm sorry about the clock,' he said.

My own face had now assumed a deep tropical burn. I couldn't muster up a single commonplace out of the thousand in my head.

'It's an old clock,' I told them idiotically.

I think we all believed for a moment that it had smashed in pieces on the floor.

'We haven't met for many years,' said Daisy,her voice as matter-of-fact as it could ever be.

'Five years next November.'

The automatic quality of Gatsby's answer set us all back at least another minute. I had them both on their feet with the desperate suggestion that they help me make tea in the kitchen when the demoniac Finn brought it in on a tray.

Amid the welcome confusion of cups and cakes a certain physical decency established itself. Gatsby got himself into a shadow and,while Daisy and I talked,looked conscientiously from one to the

other of us with tense, unhappy eyes. However, as calmness wasn't an end in itself, I made an excuse at the first possible moment, and got to my feet.

'Where are you going?' demanded Gatsby in immediate alarm.

'I'll be back.'

'I've got to speak to you about something before you go.'

He followed me wildly into the kitchen, closed the door, and whispered: 'Oh, God!' in a miserable way.

'What's the matter?'

'This is a terrible mistake,' he said, shaking his head from side to side, 'a terrible, terrible mistake.'

'You're just embarrassed, that's all,' and luckily I added: 'Daisy's embarrassed too.'

'She's embarrassed?' he repeated incredulously.

'Just as much as you are.'

'Don't talk so loud.'

'You're acting like a little boy,' I broke out impatiently. 'Not only that, but you're rude. Daisy's sitting in there all alone.'

He raised his hand to stop my words, looked at me with unforgettable reproach, and, opening the door cautiously, went back into the other room.

I walked out the back way—just as Gatsby had when he had made his nervous circuit of the house half an hour before—and ran for a huge black knotted tree, whose massed leaves made a fabric against the rain. Once more it was pouring, and my irregular lawn, well-shaved by Gatsby's gardener, abounded in small muddy swamps and prehistoric marshes. There was nothing to look at from under the tree except Gatsby's enormous house, so I stared at it, like Kant at his church steeple, for half an hour. A brewer had built it early in the 'period' craze, a decade before, and there was a story that he'd agreed to pay five years' taxes on all the neighboring cottages if the owners would have their roofs thatched with straw. Perhaps their refusal took the heart out of his plan to Found a Family—he went into an immediate decline. His children sold his house with the black wreath still on the door. Americans, while willing, even eager, to be serfs, have always been obstinate about being peasantry.

After half an hour, the sun shone again, and the grocer's automobile rounded Gatsby's drive with the raw material for his servants' dinner—I felt sure he wouldn't eat a spoonful. A maid began opening the upper windows of his house, appeared momentarily in

each, and, leaning from the large central bay, spat meditatively into the garden. It was time I went back. While the rain continued it had seemed like the murmur of their voices, rising and swelling a little now and then with gusts of emotion. But in the new silence I felt that silence had fallen within the house too.

I went in—after making every possible noise in the kitchen, short of pushing over the stove—but I don't believe they heard a sound. They were sitting at either end of the couch, looking at each other as if some question had been asked, or was in the air, and every vestige of embarrassment was gone. Daisy's face was smeared with tears, and when I came in she jumped up and began wiping at it with her handkerchief before a mirror. But there was a change in Gatsby that was simply confounding. He literally glowed; without a word or a gesture of exultation a new well-being radiated from him and filled the little room.

'Oh, hello, old sport,' he said, as if he hadn't seen me for years. I thought for a moment he was going to shake hands.

'It's stopped raining.'

'Has it?' When he realized what I was talking about, that there were twinkle-bells of sunshine in the room, he smiled like a weather man, like an ecstatic patron of recurrent light, and repeated the news to Daisy. 'What do you think of that? It's stopped raining.'

'I'm glad, Jay.' Her throat, full of aching, grieving beauty, told only of her unexpected joy.

'I want you and Daisy to come over to my house,' he said, 'I'd like to show her around.'

'You're sure you want me to come?'

'Absolutely, old sport.'

Daisy went upstairs to wash her face—too late I thought with humiliation of my towels—while Gatsby and I waited on the lawn.

'My house looks well, doesn't it?' he demanded. 'See how the whole front of it catches the light.'

I agreed that it was splendid.

'Yes.' His eyes went over it, every arched door and square tower.

'It took me just three years to earn the money that bought it.'

'I thought you inherited your money.'

'I did, old sport,' he said automatically, 'but I lost most of it in the big panic—the panic of the war.'

I think he hardly knew what he was saying, for when I asked him what business he was in he answered: 'That's my affair,' before he realized that it wasn't the appropriate reply.

'Oh,I've been in several things,' he corrected himself. 'I was in the drug business and then I was in the oil business. But I'm not in either one now.' He looked at me with more attention. 'Do you mean you've been thinking over what I proposed the other night?'

Before I could answer,Daisy came out of the house and two rows of brass buttons on her dress gleamed in the sunlight.

'That huge place there?' she cried pointing.

'Do you like it?'

'I love it,but I don't see how you live there all alone.'

'I keep it always full of interesting people,night and day. People who do interesting things. Celebrated people.'

Instead of taking the short cut along the Sound we went down to the road and entered by the big postern. With enchanting murmurs Daisy admired this aspect or that of the feudal silhouette against the sky,admired the gardens,the sparkling odor of jonquils and the frothy odour of hawthorn and plum blossoms and the pale gold odour of kiss-me-at-the-gate. It was strange to reach the marble steps and find no stir of bright dresses in and out the door,and hear no sound but bird voices in the trees.

And inside,as we wandered through Marie Antoinette music-rooms and Restoration Salons,I felt that there were guests concealed behind every couch and table,under orders to be breathlessly silent until we had passed through. As Gatsby closed the door of 'the Merton College Library' I could have sworn I heard the owl-eyed man break into ghostly laughter.

We went upstairs,through period bedrooms swathed in rose and lavender silk and vivid with new flowers,through dressing-rooms and poolrooms,and bathrooms with sunken baths—intruding into one chamber where a dishevelled man in pyjamas was doing liver exercises on the floor. It was Mr. Klipspringer,the 'boarder.' I had seen him wandering hungrily about the beach that morning. Finally we came to Gatsby's own apartment,a bedroom and a bath,and an Adam' s study,where we sat down and drank a glass of some Chartreuse he took from a cupboard in the wall.

He hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy,and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes. Sometimes,too,he stared around at his possessions in a dazed way,as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real. Once he nearly toppled down a flight of stairs.

His bedroom was the simplest room of all—except where the dresser

was garnished with a toilet set of pure dull gold. Daisy took the brush with delight, and smoothed her hair, whereupon Gatsby sat down and shaded his eyes and began to laugh.

'It's the funniest thing, old sport,' he said hilariously. 'I can't—When I try to —'

He had passed visibly through two states and was entering upon a third. After his embarrassment and his unreasoning joy he was consumed with wonder at her presence. He had been full of the idea so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, at an inconceivable pitch of intensity. Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an over-wound clock.

Recovering himself in a minute he opened for us two hulking patent cabinets which held his massed suits and dressing-gowns and ties, and his shirts, piled like bricks in stacks a dozen high.

'I've got a man in England who buys me clothes. He sends over a selection of things at the beginning of each season, spring and fall.'

He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel, which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many colored disarray. While we admired he brought more and the

soft rich heap mounted higher—shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, with monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly, with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily.

‘They’re such beautiful shirts,’ she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. ‘It makes me sad because I’ve never seen such—such beautiful shirts before.’

*

After the house, we were to see the grounds and the swimming-pool, and the hydroplane and the midsummer flowers—but outside Gatsby’s window it began to rain again, so we stood in a row looking at the corrugated surface of the Sound.

‘If it wasn’t for the mist we could see your home across the bay,’ said Gatsby. ‘You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock.’

Daisy put her arm through his abruptly, but he seemed absorbed in what he had just said. Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a

dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one.

I began to walk about the room, examining various indefinite objects in the half darkness. A large photograph of an elderly man in yachting costume attracted me, hung on the wall over his desk.

'Who's this?'

'That? That's Mr. Dan Cody, old sport.'

The name sounded faintly familiar.

'He's dead now. He used to be my best friend years ago.'

There was a small picture of Gatsby, also in yachting costume, on the bureau—Gatsby with his head thrown back defiantly—taken apparently when he was about eighteen.

'I adore it,' exclaimed Daisy. 'The pompadour! You never told me you had a pompadour—or a yacht.'

'Look at this,' said Gatsby quickly. 'Here's a lot of clippings—about you.'

They stood side by side examining it. I was going to ask to see the rubies when the phone rang, and Gatsby took up the receiver.

'Yes ... Well, I can't talk now ... I can't talk now, old sport ... I said a small town ... He must know what a small town is ...

Well,he's no use to us if Detroit is his idea of a small town ...

He rang off.

'Come here quick!' cried Daisy at the window.

The rain was still falling,but the darkness had parted in the west,and there was a pink and golden billow of foamy clouds above the sea.

'Look at that,' she whispered,and then after a moment: 'I'd like to just get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and push you around.'

I tried to go then,but they wouldn't hear of it;perhaps my presence made them feel more satisfactorily alone.

'I know what we'll do,' said Gatsby, 'we'll have Klipspringer play the piano.'

He went out of the room calling 'Ewing!' and returned in a few minutes accompanied by an embarrassed,slightly worn young man,with shell-rimmed glasses and scanty blond hair. He was now decently clothed in a 'sport shirt' ,open at the neck,sneakers,and duck trousers of a nebulous hue.

'Did we interrupt your exercises?' inquired Daisy politely.

'I was asleep,' cried Mr. Klipspringer, in a spasm of embarrassment. 'That is, I'd been asleep. Then I got up ... '

'Klipspringer plays the piano,' said Gatsby, cutting him off.

'Don't you, Ewing, old sport?'

'I don't play well. I don't—I hardly play at all. I'm all out of prac —'

'We'll go downstairs,' interrupted Gatsby. He flipped a switch. The grey windows disappeared as the house glowed full of light.

In the music-room Gatsby turned on a solitary lamp beside the piano. He lit Daisy's cigarette from a trembling match, and sat down with her on a couch far across the room, where there was no light save what the gleaming floor bounced in from the hall.

When Klipspringer had played 'The Love Nest' he turned around on the bench and searched unhappily for Gatsby in the gloom.

'I'm all out of practice, you see. I told you I couldn't play. I'm all out of prac —'

'Don't talk so much, old sport,' commanded Gatsby. 'Play!'

'In the morning,

In the evening,

Ain' t we got fun —'

Outside the wind was loud and there was a faint flow of thunder along the Sound. All the lights were going on in West Egg now; the electric trains, men-carrying, were plunging home through the rain from New York. It was the hour of a profound human change, and excitement was generating on the air.

'One thing's sure and nothing's surer

The rich get richer and the poor get—children.

In the meantime,

In between time —'

As I went over to say good-bye I saw that the expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness. Almost five years! There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man can store up in his ghostly heart.

As I watched him he adjusted himself a little,visibly. His hand took hold of hers,and as she said something low in his ear he turned toward her with a rush of emotion. I think that voice held him most,with its fluctuating,feverish warmth,because it couldn't be over-dreamed—that voice was a deathless song.

They had forgotten me,but Daisy glanced up and held out her hand;Gatsby didn't know me now at all. I looked once more at them and they looked back at me,remotely,possessed by intense life. Then I went out of the room and down the marble steps into the rain,leaving them there together.

Chapter Six

About this time an ambitious young reporter from New York arrived one morning at Gatsby's door and asked him if he had anything to say.

'Anything to say about what?' inquired Gatsby politely.

'Why—any statement to give out.'

It transpired after a confused five minutes that the man had heard Gatsby's name around his office in a connection which he either wouldn't reveal or didn't fully understand. This was his day off and with laudable initiative he had hurried out 'to see.'

It was a random shot, and yet the reporter's instinct was right. Gatsby's notoriety, spread about by the hundreds who had accepted his hospitality and so become authorities on his past, had increased all summer until he fell just short of being news. Contemporary legends such as the 'underground pipe-line to Canada' attached themselves to him, and there was one persistent story that he didn't live in a house at all, but in a boat that looked like a house and was moved secretly up and down the Long Island shore. Just why these inventions were a source of satisfaction to James Gatz of North Dakota, isn't easy to say.

James Gatz—that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career—when he saw Dan Cody's yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior. It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out to the Tuolomee, and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him up in half an hour.

I suppose he'd had the name ready for a long time, even then. His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people—his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God—a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that—and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.

For over a year he had been beating his way along the south shore of Lake Superior as a clam-digger and a salmon-fisher or in any other capacity that brought him food and bed. His brown, hardening body lived naturally through the half-fierce, half-lazy work of the

bracing days. He knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them, of young virgins because they were ignorant, of the others because they were hysterical about things which in his overwhelming self-absorption he took for granted.

But his heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked on the wash-stand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed down upon some vivid scene with an oblivious embrace. For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing.

An instinct toward his future glory had led him, some months before, to the small Lutheran College of St Olaf's in southern Minnesota. He stayed there two weeks, dismayed at its ferocious indifference to the drums of his destiny, to destiny itself, and despising the janitor's work with which he was to pay his way through. Then he drifted back to Lake Superior, and he was still searching for something to do on the day that Dan Cody's yacht dropped anchor in the shallows alongshore.

Cody was fifty years old then, a product of the Nevada silver fields, of the Yukon, of every rush for metal since seventy-five. The transactions in Montana copper that made him many times a millionaire found him physically robust but on the verge of softmindedness, and, suspecting this, an infinite number of women tried to separate him from his money. The none too savoury ramifications by which Ella Kaye, the newspaper woman, played Madame de Maintenon to his weakness and sent him to sea in a yacht, were common property of the turgid journalism of 1902. He had been coasting along all too hospitable shores for five years when he turned up as James Gatz's destiny in Little Girl Bay.

To young Gatz, resting on his oars and looking up at the railed deck, the yacht represented all the beauty and glamour in the world. I suppose he smiled at Cody—he had probably discovered that people liked him when he smiled. At any rate Cody asked him a few questions (one of them elicited the brand new name) and found that he was quick and extravagantly ambitious. A few days later he took him to Duluth and bought him a blue coat, six pair of white duck trousers, and a yachting cap. And when the Tuolomee left for the West Indies and the Barbary Coast Gatsby left too.

He was employed in a vague personal capacity—while he remained with Cody he was in turn steward, mate, skipper, secretary, and even jailor, for Dan Cody sober knew what lavish doings Dan Cody drunk

might soon be about, and he provided for such contingencies by reposing more and more trust in Gatsby. The arrangement lasted five years, during which the boat went three times around the Continent. It might have lasted indefinitely except for the fact that Ella Kaye came on board one night in Boston and a week later Dan Cody inhospitably died.

I remember the portrait of him up in Gatsby's bedroom, a grey, florid man with a hard, empty face—the pioneer debauchee, who during one phase of American life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon. It was indirectly due to Cody that Gatsby drank so little. Sometimes in the course of gay parties women used to rub champagne into his hair; for himself he formed the habit of letting liquor alone.

And it was from Cody that he inherited money—a legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars. He didn't get it. He never understood the legal device that was used against him, but what remained of the millions went intact to Ella Kaye. He was left with his singularly appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man.

He told me all this very much later, but I've put it down here with the idea of exploding those first wild rumours about his antecedents, which weren't even faintly true. Moreover he told it to

me at a time of confusion,when I had reached the point of believing everything and nothing about him. So I take advantage of this short halt,while Gatsby,so to speak,caught his breath,to clear this set of misconceptions away.

It was a halt,too,in my association with his affairs. For several weeks I didn't see him or hear his voice on the phone—mostly I was in New York,trotting around with Jordan and trying to ingratiate myself with her senile aunt—but finally I went over to his house one Sunday afternoon. I hadn't been there two minutes when somebody brought Tom Buchanan in for a drink. I was startled,naturally,but the really surprising thing was that it hadn't happened before.

They were a party of three on horseback—Tom and a man named Sloane and a pretty woman in a brown riding-habit,who had been there previously.

'I'm delighted to see you,' said Gatsby,standing on his porch.

'I'm delighted that you dropped in.'

As though they cared!

'Sit right down. Have a cigarette or a cigar.' He walked around the room quickly,ringing bells. 'I'll have something to drink for you in just a minute.'

He was profoundly affected by the fact that Tom was there. But he

would be uneasy anyhow until he had given them something, realizing in a vague way that that was all they came for. Mr. Sloane wanted nothing. A lemonade? No, thanks. A little champagne? Nothing at all, thanks ... I'm sorry —

'Did you have a nice ride?'

'Very good roads around here.'

'I suppose the automobiles —'

'Yeah.'

Moved by an irresistible impulse, Gatsby turned to Tom, who had accepted the introduction as a stranger.

'I believe we've met somewhere before, Mr. Buchanan.'

'Oh, yes,' said Tom, gruffly polite, but obviously not remembering.

'So we did. I remember very well.'

'About two weeks ago.'

'That's right. You were with Nick here.'

'I know your wife,' continued Gatsby, almost aggressively.

'That so?'

Tom turned to me.

'You live near here,Nick?'

'Next door.'

'That so?'

Mr.Sloane didn't enter into the conversation,but lounged back haughtily in his chair;the woman said nothing either—until unexpectedly,after two highballs,she became cordial.

'We'll all come over to your next party,Mr.Gatsby,' she suggested. 'What do you say?'

'Certainly;I'd be delighted to have you.'

'Be ver' nice,' said Mr.Sloane,without gratitude. 'Well—think ought to be starting home.'

'Please don't hurry,' Gatsby urged them. He had control of himself now,and he wanted to see more of Tom. 'Why don't you—why don't you stay for supper? I wouldn't be surprised if some other people dropped in from New York.'

'You come to supper with me,' said the lady enthusiastically.

'Both of you.'

This included me. Mr.Sloane got to his feet.

'Come along,' he said—but to her only.

'I mean it,' she insisted. 'I'd love to have you. Lots of room.'

Gatsby looked at me questioningly. He wanted to go, and he didn't see that Mr. Sloane had determined he shouldn't.

'I'm afraid I won't be able to,' I said.

'Well, you come,' she urged, concentrating on Gatsby.

Mr. Sloane murmured something close to her ear.

'We won't be late if we start now,' she insisted aloud.

'I haven't got a horse,' said Gatsby. 'I used to ride in the army, but I've never bought a horse. I'll have to follow you in my car. Excuse me for just a minute.'

The rest of us walked out on the porch, where Sloane and the lady began an impassioned conversation aside.

'My God, I believe the man's coming,' said Tom. 'Doesn't he know she doesn't want him?'

'She says she does want him.'

'She has a big dinner party and he won't know a soul there,' He frowned. 'I wonder where in the devil he met Daisy. By God, I may be old-fashioned in my ideas, but women run around too much these

days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish.'

Suddenly Mr.Sloane and the lady walked down the steps and mounted their horses.

'Come on,' said Mr.Sloane to Tom, 'we're late. We've got to go.'
And then to me: 'Tell him we couldn't wait,will you?'

Tom and I shook hands,the rest of us exchanged a cool nod,and they trotted quickly down the drive,disappearing under the August foliage just as Gatsby,with hat and light overcoat in hand,came out the front door.

Tom was evidently perturbed at Daisy's running around alone,for on the following Saturday night he came with her to Gatsby's party. Perhaps his presence gave the evening its peculiar quality of oppressiveness—it stands out in my memory from Gatsby's other parties that summer. There were the same people,or at least the same sort of people,the same profusion of champagne,the same many-colored,many-keyed commotion,but I felt an unpleasantness in the air,a pervading harshness that hadn't been there before. Or perhaps I had merely grown used to it,grown to accept West Egg as a world complete in itself,with its own standards and its own great figures,second to nothing because it had no consciousness of being so,and now I was looking at it again,through Daisy's eyes. It is invariably saddening to look through new eyes at things upon which

you have expended your own powers of adjustment.

They arrived at twilight, and, as we strolled out among the sparkling hundreds, Daisy's voice was playing murmurous tricks in her throat.

'These things excite me so,' she whispered. 'If you want to kiss me any time during the evening, Nick, just let me know and I'll be glad to arrange it for you. Just mention my name. Or present a green card. I'm giving out green —'

'Look around,' suggested Gatsby.

'I'm looking around. I'm having a marvelous —'

'You must see the faces of many people you've heard about.'

Tom's arrogant eyes roamed the crowd.

'We don't go around very much,' he said; 'in fact, I was just thinking I don't know a soul here.'

'Perhaps you know that lady,' Gatsby indicated a gorgeous, scarcely human orchid of a woman who sat in state under a white-plum tree. Tom and Daisy stared, with that peculiarly unreal feeling that accompanies the recognition of a hitherto ghostly celebrity of the movies.

'She's lovely,' said Daisy.

'The man bending over her is her director.'

He took them ceremoniously from group to group:

'Mrs.Buchanan ... and Mr.Buchanan —' After an instant's hesitation he added: 'the polo player.'

'Oh no,' objected Tom quickly, 'not me.'

But evidently the sound of it pleased Gatsby for Tom remained 'the polo player' for the rest of the evening.

'I've never met so many celebrities,' Daisy exclaimed, 'I liked that man—what was his name?—with the sort of blue nose.'

Gatsby identified him,adding that he was a small producer.

'Well,I liked him anyhow.'

'I'd a little rather not be the polo player,' said Tom pleasantly, 'I'd rather look at all these famous people in-in oblivion.'

Daisy and Gatsby danced. I remember being surprised by his graceful,conservative fox-trot—I had never seen him dance before. Then they sauntered over to my house and sat on the steps for half an hour,while at her request I remained watchfully in the garden: 'In case there's a fire or a flood,' she explained, 'or

any act of God.'

Tom appeared from his oblivion as we were sitting down to supper together. 'Do you mind if I eat with some people over here?' he said. 'A fellow's getting off some funny stuff.'

'Go ahead,' answered Daisy genially, 'and if you want to take down any addresses here's my little gold pencil.' ... She looked around after a moment and told me the girl was 'common but pretty', and I knew that except for the half-hour she'd been alone with Gatsby she wasn't having a good time.

We were at a particularly tipsy table. That was my fault—Gatsby had been called to the phone, and I'd enjoyed these same people only two weeks before. But what had amused me then turned septic on the air now.

'How do you feel, Miss Baedeker?'

The girl addressed was trying, unsuccessfully, to slump against my shoulder. At this inquiry she sat up and opened her eyes.

'Wha'?'

A massive and lethargic woman, who had been urging Daisy to play golf with her at the local club tomorrow, spoke in Miss Baedeker's defence:

'Oh, she's all right now. When she's had five or six cocktails she always starts screaming like that. I tell her she ought to leave it alone.'

'I do leave it alone,' affirmed the accused hollowly.

'We heard you yelling, so I said to Doc Civet here: "There's somebody that needs your help, Doc." '

'She's much obliged, I'm sure,' said another friend, without gratitude, 'but you got her dress all wet when you stuck her head in the pool.'

'Anything I hate is to get my head stuck in a pool,' mumbled Miss Baedeker. 'They almost drowned me once over in New Jersey.'

'Then you ought to leave it alone,' countered Doctor Civet.

'Speak for yourself!' cried Miss Baedeker violently. 'Your hand shakes. I wouldn't let you operate on me!'

It was like that. Almost the last thing I remember was standing with Daisy and watching the moving-picture director and his Star. They were still under the white-plum tree and their faces were touching except for a pale, thin ray of moonlight between. It occurred to me that he had been very slowly bending toward her all evening to attain this proximity, and even while I watched I saw him

stoop one ultimate degree and kiss at her cheek.

'I like her,' said Daisy, 'I think she's lovely.'

But the rest offended her—and inarguably, because it wasn't a gesture but an emotion. She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented 'place' that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village—appalled by its raw vigor that chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand.

I sat on the front steps with them while they waited for their car. It was dark here in front; only the bright door sent ten square feet of light volleying out into the soft black morning. Sometimes a shadow moved against a dressing-room blind above, gave way to another shadow, an indefinite procession of shadows, who rouged and powdered in an invisible glass.

'Who is this Gatsby anyhow?' demanded Tom suddenly. 'Some big bootlegger?'

'Where'd you hear that?' I inquired.

'I didn't hear it. I imagined it. A lot of these newly rich people are just big bootleggers, you know.'

'Not Gatsby,' I said shortly.

He was silent for a moment. The pebbles of the drive crunched under his feet.

'Well, he certainly must have strained himself to get this menagerie together.'

A breeze stirred the grey haze of Daisy's fur collar.

'At least they are more interesting than the people we know,' she said with an effort.

'You didn't look so interested.'

'Well, I was.'

Tom laughed and turned to me.

'Did you notice Daisy's face when that girl asked her to put her under a cold shower?'

Daisy began to sing with the music in a husky, rhythmic whisper, bringing out a meaning in each word that it had never had before and would never have again. When the melody rose her voice broke up sweetly, following it, in a way contralto voices have, and each change tipped out a little of her warm human magic upon the air.

'Lots of people come who haven't been invited,' she said suddenly. 'That girl hadn't been invited. They simply force their way in and he's too polite to object.'

'I'd like to know who he is and what he does,' insisted Tom.

'And I think I'll make a point of finding out.'

'I can tell you right now,' she answered. 'He owned some drug-stores,a lot of drug-stores. He built them up himself.'

The dilatory limousine came rolling up the drive.

'Good night,Nick,' said Daisy.

Her glance left me and sought the lighted top of the steps,where

'Three o'clock in the Morning' ,a neat,sad little waltz of that year,was drifting out the open door. After all,in the very casualness of Gatsby's party there were romantic possibilities totally absent from her world. What was it up there in the song that seemed to be calling her back inside? What would happen now in the dim,incalculable hours? Perhaps some unbelievable guest would arrive,a person infinitely rare and to be marvelled at,some authentically radiant young girl who with one fresh glance at Gatsby,one moment of magical encounter,would blot out those five years of unwavering devotion.

I stayed late that night,Gatsby asked me to wait until he was

free, and I lingered in the garden until the inevitable swimming party had run up, chilled and exalted, from the black beach, until the lights were extinguished in the guest-rooms overhead. When he came down the steps at last the tanned skin was drawn unusually tight on his face, and his eyes were bright and tired.

'She didn't like it,' he said immediately.

'Of course she did.'

'She didn't like it,' he insisted. 'She didn't have a good time.'

He was silent, and I guessed at his unutterable depression.

'I feel far away from her,' he said. 'It's hard to make her understand.'

'You mean about the dance?'

'The dance?' He dismissed all the dances he had given with a snap of his fingers. 'Old sport, the dance is unimportant.'

He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you.' After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house—just

as if it were five years ago.

'And she doesn't understand,' he said. 'She used to be able to understand. We'd sit for hours —'

He broke off and began to walk up and down a desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favours and crushed flowers.

'I wouldn't ask too much of her,' I ventured. 'You can't repeat the past.'

'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!'

He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.

'I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before,' he said, nodding determinedly. 'She'll see.'

He talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was ...

... One autumn night, five years before, they had been walking down the street when the leaves were falling, and they came to a place

where there were no trees and the sidewalk was white with moonlight. They stopped here and turned toward each other. Now it was a cool night with that mysterious excitement in it which comes at the two changes of the year. The quiet lights in the houses were humming out into the darkness and there was a stir and bustle among the stars. Out of the corner of his eye Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalks really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees—he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and once there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder.

His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete.

Through all he said, even through his appalling sentimentality, I was reminded of something—an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago. For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man's, as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air. But they made no sound, and what I had almost

remembered was uncommunicable forever.

Chapter Seven

It was when curiosity about Gatsby was at its highest that the lights in his house failed to go on one Saturday night—and, as obscurely as it had begun, his career as Trimalchio was over. Only gradually did I become aware that the automobiles which turned expectantly into his drive stayed for just a minute and then drove sulkily away. Wondering if he were sick I went over to find out—an unfamiliar butler with a villainous face squinted at me suspiciously from the door.

‘Is Mr. Gatsby sick?’

‘Nope.’ After a pause he added ‘sir’ in a dilatory, grudging way.

‘I hadn't seen him around, and I was rather worried. Tell him Mr. Carraway came over.’

‘Who?’ he demanded rudely.

‘Carraway.’

‘Carraway. All right, I'll tell him.’

Abruptly he slammed the door.

My Finn informed me that Gatsby had dismissed every servant in his house a week ago and replaced them with half a dozen others, who never went into West Egg Village to be bribed by the tradesmen, but ordered moderate supplies over the telephone. The grocery boy reported that the kitchen looked like a pigsty, and the general opinion in the village was that the new people weren't servants at all.

Next day Gatsby called me on the phone.

'Going away?' I inquired.

'No, old sport.'

'I hear you fired all your servants.'

'I wanted somebody who wouldn't gossip. Daisy comes over quite often—in the afternoons.'

So the whole caravansary had fallen in like a card house at the disapproval in her eyes.

'They're some people Wolfshiem wanted to do something for. They're all brothers and sisters. They used to run a small hotel.'

'I see.'

He was calling up at Daisy's request—would I come to lunch at her

house to-morrow? Miss Baker would be there. Half an hour later Daisy herself telephoned and seemed relieved to find that I was coming. Something was up. And yet I couldn't believe that they would choose this occasion for a scene—especially for the rather harrowing scene that Gatsby had outlined in the garden.

The next day was broiling,almost the last,certainly the warmest,of the summer. As my train emerged from the tunnel into sunlight,only the hot whistles of the National Biscuit Company broke the simmering hush at noon. The straw seats of the car hovered on the edge of combustion;the woman next to me perspired delicately for a while into her white shirtwaist,and then,as her newspaper dampened under her fingers,lapsed despairingly into deep heat with a desolate cry. Her pocket-book slapped to the floor.

'Oh,my!' she gasped.

I picked it up with a weary bend and handed it back to her,holding it at arm's length and by the extreme tip of the corners to indicate that I had no designs upon it—but every one near by,including the woman,suspected me just the same.

'Hot!' said the conductor to familiar faces. 'Some weather! ... Hot! ... Hot! ... Hot! ... Is it hot enough for you? Is it hot? Is it ... ?'

My commutation ticket came back to me with a dark stain from his hand. That any one should care in this heat whose flushed lips he kissed,whose head made damp the pyjama pocket over his heart!

... Through the hall of the Buchanans' house blew a faint wind,carrying the sound of the telephone bell out to Gatsby and me as we waited at the door.

'The master's body!' roared the butler into the mouthpiece. 'I'm sorry, madame, but we can't furnish it—it's far too hot to touch this noon!'

What he really said was: 'Yes ... Yes ... I'll see.'

He set down the receiver and came toward us,gllistening slightly,to take our stiff straw hats.

'Madame expects you in the salon!' he cried,needlessly indicating the direction. In this heat every extra gesture was an affront to the common store of life.

The room,shadowed well with awnings,was dark and cool. Daisy and Jordan lay upon an enormous couch,like silver idols weighing down their own white dresses against the singing breeze of the fans.

'We can't move,' they said together.

Jordan's fingers,powdered white over their tan,rested for a moment

in mine.

'And Mr. Thomas Buchanan, the athlete?' I inquired.

Simultaneously I heard his voice, gruff, muffled, husky, at the hall telephone.

Gatsby stood in the center of the crimson carpet and gazed around with fascinated eyes. Daisy watched him and laughed, her sweet, exciting laugh; a tiny gust of powder rose from her bosom into the air.

'The rumor is,' whispered Jordan, 'that that's Tom's girl on the telephone.'

We were silent. The voice in the hall rose high with annoyance: 'Very well, then, I won't sell you the car at all ... I'm under no obligations to you at all ... and as for your bothering me about it at lunch time, I won't stand that at all!'

'Holding down the receiver,' said Daisy cynically.

'No, he's not,' I assured her. 'It's a bona-fide deal. I happen to know about it.'

Tom flung open the door, blocked out its space for a moment with his thick body, and hurried into the room.

'Mr.Gatsby!' He put out his broad,flat hand with well-concealed dislike. 'I'm glad to see you,sir. ... Nick ...'

'Make us a cold drink,' cried Daisy.

As he left the room again she got up and went over to Gatsby and pulled his face down,kissing him on the mouth.

'You know I love you,' she murmured.

'You forget there's a lady present,' said Jordan.

Daisy looked around doubtfully.

'You kiss Nick too.'

'What a low,vulgar girl!'

'I don't care!' cried Daisy,and began to clog on the brick fireplace. Then she remembered the heat and sat down guiltily on the couch just as a freshly laundered nurse leading a little girl came into the room.

'Bles-sed pre-cious,' she crooned,holding out her arms. 'Come to your own mother that loves you.'

The child,relinquished by the nurse,rushed across the room and rooted shyly into her mother's dress.

'The bles-sed pre-cious! Did mother get powder on your old yellowy hair? Stand up now, and say—How-de-do.'

Gatsby and I in turn leaned down and took the small reluctant hand. Afterward he kept looking at the child with surprise. I don't think he had ever really believed in its existence before.

'I got dressed before luncheon,' said the child, turning eagerly to Daisy.

'That's because your mother wanted to show you off.' Her face bent into the single wrinkle of the small white neck. 'You dream, you. You absolute little dream.'

'Yes,' admitted the child calmly. 'Aunt Jordan's got on a white dress too.'

'How do you like mother's friends?' Daisy turned her around so that she faced Gatsby. 'Do you think they're pretty?'

'Where's Daddy?'

'She doesn't look like her father,' explained Daisy. 'She looks like me. She's got my hair and shape of the face.'

Daisy sat back upon the couch. The nurse took a step forward and held out her hand.

'Come, Pammy.'

'Good-bye, sweetheart!'

With a reluctant backward glance the well-disciplined child held to her nurse's hand and was pulled out the door, just as Tom came back, preceding four gin rickeys that clicked full of ice.

Gatsby took up his drink.

'They certainly look cool,' he said, with visible tension.

We drank in long, greedy swallows.

'I read somewhere that the sun's getting hotter every year,' said Tom genially. 'It seems that pretty soon the earth's going to fall into the sun—or wait a minute—it's just the opposite—the sun's getting colder every year.'

'Come outside,' he suggested to Gatsby, 'I'd like you to have a look at the place.'

I went with them out to the veranda. On the green Sound, stagnant in the heat, one small sail crawled slowly toward the fresher sea. Gatsby's eyes followed it momentarily; he raised his hand and pointed across the bay.

'I'm right across from you.'

'So you are.'

Our eyes lifted over the rose-beds and the hot lawn and the weedy refuse of the dog-days alongshore. Slowly the white wings of the boat moved against the blue cool limit of the sky. Ahead lay the scalloped ocean and the abounding blessed isles.

'There's sport for you,' said Tom, nodding. 'I'd like to be out there with him for about an hour.'

We had luncheon in the dining-room, darkened too against the heat, and drank down nervous gaiety with the cold ale.

'What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon?' cried Daisy, 'and the day after that, and the next thirty years?'

'Don't be morbid,' Jordan said. 'Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall.'

'But it's so hot,' insisted Daisy, on the verge of tears, 'and everything's so confused. Let's all go to town!'

Her voice struggled on through the heat, beating against it, moulding its senselessness into forms.

'I've heard of making a garage out of a stable,' Tom was saying to Gatsby, 'but I'm the first man who ever made a stable out of a garage.'

'Who wants to go to town?' demanded Daisy insistently. Gatsby's eyes floated toward her. 'Ah,' she cried, 'you look so cool.'

Their eyes met, and they stared together at each other, alone in space. With an effort she glanced down at the table.

'You always look so cool,' she repeated.

She had told him that she loved him, and Tom Buchanan saw. He was astounded. His mouth opened a little and he looked at Gatsby, and then back at Daisy as if he had just recognized her as someone he knew a long time ago.

'You resemble the advertisement of the man,' she went on innocently. 'You know the advertisement of the man —'

'All right,' broke in Tom quickly, 'I'm perfectly willing to go to town. Come on—we're all going to town.'

He got up, his eyes still flashing between Gatsby and his wife. No one moved.

'Come on!' His temper cracked a little. 'What's the matter, anyhow? If we're going to town, let's start.'

His hand, trembling with his effort at self-control, bore to his lips the last of his glass of ale. Daisy's voice got us to our feet and out on to the blazing gravel drive.

'Are we just going to go?' she objected. 'Like this? Aren't we going to let any one smoke a cigarette first?'

'Everybody smoked all through lunch.'

'Oh,let's have fun,' she begged him. 'It's too hot to fuss.'

He didn't answer.

'Have it your own way,' she said. 'Come on,Jordan.'

They went upstairs to get ready while we three men stood there shuffling the hot pebbles with our feet. A silver curve of the moon hovered already in the western sky. Gatsby started to speak,changed his mind,but not before Tom wheeled and faced him expectantly.

'Have you got your stables here?' asked Gatsby with an effort.

'About a quarter of a mile down the road.'

'Oh.'

A pause.

'I don't see the idea of going to town,' broke out Tom savagely.

'Women get these notions in their heads —'

'Shall we take anything to drink?' called Daisy from an upper window.

'I'll get some whiskey,' answered Tom. He went inside.

Gatsby turned to me rigidly:

'I can't say anything in his house,old sport.'

'She's got an indiscreet voice,' I remarked. 'It's full of —'
I hesitated.

'Her voice is full of money,' he said suddenly.

That was it. I'd never understood before. It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it,the jingle of it,the cymbals' song of it ... High in a white palace the king's daughter,the golden girl ...

Tom came out of the house wrapping a quart bottle in a towel,followed by Daisy and Jordan wearing small tight hats of metallic cloth and carrying light capes over their arms.

'Shall we all go in my car?' suggested Gatsby. He felt the hot,green leather of the seat. 'I ought to have left it in the shade.'

'Is it standard shift?' demanded Tom.

'Yes.'

'Well,you take my coupé and let me drive your car to town.'

The suggestion was distasteful to Gatsby.

'I don't think there's much gas,' he objected.

'Plenty of gas,' said Tom boisterously. He looked at the gauge.

'And if it runs out I can stop at a drug-store. You can buy anything at a drug-store nowadays.'

A pause followed this apparently pointless remark. Daisy looked at Tom frowning, and an indefinable expression, at once definitely unfamiliar and vaguely recognizable, as if I had only heard it described in words, passed over Gatsby's face.

'Come on, Daisy,' said Tom, pressing her with his hand toward Gatsby's car. 'I'll take you in this circus wagon.'

He opened the door, but she moved out from the circle of his arm.

'You take Nick and Jordan. We'll follow you in the coupé.'

She walked close to Gatsby, touching his coat with her hand. Jordan and Tom and I got into the front seat of Gatsby's car, Tom pushed the unfamiliar gears tentatively, and we shot off into the oppressive heat, leaving them out of sight behind.

'Did you see that?' demanded Tom.

'See what?'

He looked at me keenly, realizing that Jordan and I must have known all along.

'You think I'm pretty dumb, don't you?' he suggested. 'Perhaps I am, but I have a—almost a second sight, sometimes, that tells me what to do. Maybe you don't believe that, but science —'

He paused. The immediate contingency overtook him, pulled him back from the edge of the theoretical abyss.

'I've made a small investigation of this fellow,' he continued. 'I could have gone deeper if I'd known —'

'Do you mean you've been to a medium?' inquired Jordan humorously.

'What?' Confused, he stared at us as we laughed. 'A medium?'

'About Gatsby.'

'About Gatsby! No, I haven't. I said I'd been making a small investigation of his past.'

'And you found he was an Oxford man,' said Jordan helpfully.

'An Oxford man!' He was incredulous. 'Like hell he is! He wears a pink suit.'

'Nevertheless he's an Oxford man.'

'Oxford, New Mexico,' snorted Tom contemptuously, 'or something like that.'

'Listen, Tom. If you're such a snob, why did you invite him to lunch?' demanded Jordan crossly.

'Daisy invited him; she knew him before we were married—God knows where!'

We were all irritable now with the fading ale, and aware of it we drove for a while in silence. Then as Doctor T. J. Eckleburg's faded eyes came into sight down the road, I remembered Gatsby's caution about gasoline.

'We've got enough to get us to town,' said Tom.

'But there's a garage right here,' objected Jordan. 'I don't want to get stalled in this baking heat.'

Tom threw on both brakes impatiently, and we slid to an abrupt dusty stop under Wilson's sign. After a moment the proprietor emerged from the interior of his establishment and gazed hollow-eyed at the car.

'Let's have some gas!' cried Tom roughly. 'What do you think we stopped for—to admire the view?'

'I'm sick,' said Wilson without moving. 'Been sick all day.'

'What's the matter?'

'I'm all run down.'

'Well, shall I help myself?' Tom demanded. 'You sounded well enough on the phone.'

With an effort Wilson left the shade and support of the doorway and, breathing hard, unscrewed the cap of the tank. In the sunlight his face was green.

'I didn't mean to interrupt your lunch,' he said. 'But I need money pretty bad, and I was wondering what you were going to do with your old car.'

'How do you like this one?' inquired Tom. 'I bought it last week.'

'It's a nice yellow one,' said Wilson, as he strained at the handle.

'Like to buy it?'

'Big chance,' Wilson smiled faintly. 'No, but I could make some money on the other.'

'What do you want money for, all of a sudden?'

'I've been here too long. I want to get away. My wife and I want

to go West.'

'Your wife does,' exclaimed Tom, startled.

'She's been talking about it for ten years.' He rested for a moment against the pump, shading his eyes. 'And now she's going whether she wants to or not. I'm going to get her away.'

The coupé flashed by us with a flurry of dust and the flash of a waving hand.

'What do I owe you?' demanded Tom harshly.

'I just got wised up to something funny the last two days,' remarked Wilson. 'That's why I want to get away. That's why I been bothering you about the car.'

'What do I owe you?'

'Dollar twenty.'

The relentless beating heat was beginning to confuse me and I had a bad moment there before I realized that so far his suspicions hadn't alighted on Tom. He had discovered that Myrtle had some sort of life apart from him in another world, and the shock had made him physically sick. I stared at him and then at Tom, who had made a parallel discovery less than an hour before—and it occurred to me that there was no difference between men, in intelligence or race, so

profound as the difference between the sick and the well. Wilson was so sick that he looked guilty, unforgivably guilty—as if he had just got some poor girl with child.

‘I’ll let you have that car,’ said Tom. ‘I’ll send it over tomorrow afternoon.’

That locality was always vaguely disquieting, even in the broad glare of afternoon, and now I turned my head as though I had been warned of something behind. Over the ashheaps the giant eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg kept their vigil, but I perceived, after a moment, that other eyes were regarding us with peculiar intensity from less than twenty feet away.

In one of the windows over the garage the curtains had been moved aside a little, and Myrtle Wilson was peering down at the car. So engrossed was she that she had no consciousness of being observed, and one emotion after another crept into her face like objects into a slowly developing picture. Her expression was curiously familiar—it was an expression I had often seen on women's faces, but on Myrtle Wilson's face it seemed purposeless and inexplicable until I realized that her eyes, wide with jealous terror, were fixed not on Tom, but on Jordan Baker, whom she took to be his wife.

There is no confusion like the confusion of a simple mind, and as we drove away Tom was feeling the hot whips of panic. His wife and his mistress, until an hour ago secure and inviolate, were slipping precipitately from his control. Instinct made him step on the accelerator with the double purpose of overtaking Daisy and leaving Wilson behind, and we sped along toward Astoria at fifty miles an hour, until, among the spidery girders of the elevated, we came in sight of the easygoing blue coupé.

‘Those big movies around Fiftieth Street are cool,’ suggested Jordan. ‘I love New York on summer afternoons when everyone’s away. There’s something very sensuous about it—overripe, as if all sorts of funny fruits were going to fall into your hands.’

The word ‘sensuous’ had the effect of further disquieting Tom, but before he could invent a protest the coupé came to a stop, and Daisy signalled us to draw up alongside.

‘Where are we going?’ she cried.

‘How about the movies?’

‘It’s so hot,’ she complained. ‘You go. We’ll ride around and meet you after.’ With an effort her wit rose faintly, ‘We’ll meet you on some corner. I’ll be the man smoking two cigarettes.’

‘We can’t argue about it here,’ Tom said impatiently, as a truck

gave out a cursing whistle behind us. 'You follow me to the south side of Central Park,in front of the Plaza.'

Several times he turned his head and looked back for their car,and if the traffic delayed them he slowed up until they came into sight. I think he was afraid they would dart down a side street and out of his life forever.

But they didn't. And we all took the less explicable step of engaging the parlour of a suite in the Plaza Hotel.

The prolonged and tumultuous argument that ended by herding us into that room eludes me,though I have a sharp physical memory that,in the course of it,my underwear kept climbing like a damp snake around my legs and intermittent beads of sweat raced cool across my back. The notion originated with Daisy's suggestion that we hire five bathrooms and take cold baths,and then assumed more tangible form as 'a place to have a mint julep.' Each of us said over and over that it was a 'crazy idea' —we all talked at once to a baffled clerk and thought,or pretended to think,that we were being very funny ...

The room was large and stifling,and,though it was already four o'clock,opening the windows admitted only a gust of hot shrubbery from the Park. Daisy went to the mirror and stood with her back to us,fixing her hair.

'It's a swell suite,' whispered Jordan respectfully and every one laughed.

'Open another window,' commanded Daisy, without turning around.

'There aren't any more.'

'Well, we'd better telephone for an axe —'

'The thing to do is to forget about the heat,' said Tom impatiently. 'You make it ten times worse by crabbing about it.'

He unrolled the bottle of whiskey from the towel and put it on the table.

'Why not let her alone, old sport?' remarked Gatsby. 'You're the one that wanted to come to town.'

There was a moment of silence. The telephone book slipped from its nail and splashed to the floor, whereupon Jordan whispered, 'Excuse me' —but this time no one laughed.

'I'll pick it up,' I offered.

'I've got it.' Gatsby examined the parted string, muttered 'Hum!' in an interested way, and tossed the book on a chair.

'That's a great expression of yours, isn't it?' said Tom sharply.

'What is?'

'All this "old sport" business. Where'd you pick that up?'

'Now see here,Tom,' said Daisy,turning around from the mirror, 'if you're going to make personal remarks I won't stay here a minute. Call up and order some ice for the mint julep.'

As Tom took up the receiver the compressed heat exploded into sound and we were listening to the portentous chords of Mendelssohn's Wedding March from the ballroom below.

'Imagine marrying anybody in this heat!' cried Jordan dismally.

'Still—I was married in the middle of June,' Daisy remembered, 'Louisville in June! Somebody fainted. Who was it fainted,Tom?'

'Biloxi,' he answered shortly.

'A man named Biloxi. "Blocks" Biloxi,and he made boxes—that's a fact—and he was from Biloxi,Tennessee.'

'They carried him into my house,' appended Jordan, 'because we lived just two doors from the church. And he stayed three weeks,until Daddy told him he had to get out. The day after he left Daddy died.' After a moment she added. 'There wasn't any connection.'

'I used to know a Bill Biloxi from Memphis,' I remarked.

'That was his cousin. I knew his whole family history before he left. He gave me an aluminum putter that I use to-day.'

The music had died down as the ceremony began and now a long cheer floated in at the window, followed by intermittent cries of 'Yea—ea—ea!' and finally by a burst of jazz as the dancing began.

'We're getting old,' said Daisy. 'If we were young we'd rise and dance.'

'Remember Biloxi,' Jordan warned her. 'Where'd you know him, Tom?'

'Biloxi?' He concentrated with an effort. 'I didn't know him. He was a friend of Daisy's.'

'He was not,' she denied. 'I'd never seen him before. He came down in the private car.'

'Well, he said he knew you. He said he was raised in Louisville. As a Bird brought him around at the last minute and asked if we had room for him.'

Jordan smiled.

'He was probably bumming his way home. He told me he was president

of your class at Yale.'

Tom and I looked at each other blankly.

'Biloxi?'

'First place,we didn't have any president —'

Gatsby's foot beat a short,restless tattoo and Tom eyed him suddenly.

'By the way,Mr. Gatsby,I understand you're an Oxford man.'

'Not exactly.'

'Oh,yes,I understand you went to Oxford.'

'Yes—I went there.'

A pause. Then Tom's voice,incredulous and insulting:

'You must have gone there about the time Biloxi went to New Haven.'

Another pause. A waiter knocked and came in with crushed mint and ice but the silence was unbroken by his 'thank you' and the soft closing of the door. This tremendous detail was to be cleared up at last.

'I told you I went there,' said Gatsby.

'I heard you, but I'd like to know when.'

'It was in nineteen-nineteen, I only stayed five months. That's why I can't really call myself an Oxford man.'

Tom glanced around to see if we mirrored his disbelief. But we were all looking at Gatsby.

'It was an opportunity they gave to some of the officers after the armistice,' he continued. 'We could go to any of the universities in England or France.'

I wanted to get up and slap him on the back. I had one of those renewals of complete faith in him that I'd experienced before.

Daisy rose, smiling faintly, and went to the table.

'Open the whiskey, Tom,' she ordered, 'and I'll make you a mint julep. Then you won't seem so stupid to yourself ... Look at the mint!'

'Wait a minute,' snapped Tom, 'I want to ask Mr. Gatsby one more question.'

'Go on,' Gatsby said politely.

'What kind of a row are you trying to cause in my house anyhow?'

They were out in the open at last and Gatsby was content.

'He isn't causing a row,' Daisy looked desperately from one to the other. 'You're causing a row. Please have a little self-control.'

'Self-control!' repeated Tom incredulously. 'I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr.Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well,if that's the idea you can count me out ... Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions,and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white.'

Flushed with his impassioned gibberish,he saw himself standing alone on the last barrier of civilization.

'We're all white here,' murmured Jordan.

'I know I'm not very popular. I don't give big parties. I suppose you've got to make your house into a pigsty in order to have any friends—in the modern world.'

Angry as I was,as we all were,I was tempted to laugh whenever he opened his mouth. The transition from libertine to prig was so complete.

'I've got something to tell you,old sport —' began Gatsby. But Daisy guessed at his intention.

'Please don't!' she interrupted helplessly. 'Please let's all go home. Why don't we all go home?'

'That's a good idea.' I got up. 'Come on, Tom. Nobody wants a drink.'

'I want to know what Mr. Gatsby has to tell me.'

'Your wife doesn't love you,' said Gatsby. 'She's never loved you. She loves me.'

'You must be crazy!' exclaimed Tom automatically.

Gatsby sprang to his feet, vivid with excitement.

'She never loved you, do you hear?' he cried. 'She only married you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me. It was a terrible mistake, but in her heart she never loved any one except me!'

At this point Jordan and I tried to go, but Tom and Gatsby insisted with competitive firmness that we remain—as though neither of them had anything to conceal and it would be a privilege to partake vicariously of their emotions.

'Sit down, Daisy,' Tom's voice groped unsuccessfully for the paternal note. 'What's been going on? I want to hear all about it.'

'I told you what's been going on,' said Gatsby. 'Going on for five years—and you didn't know.'

Tom turned to Daisy sharply.

'You've been seeing this fellow for five years?'

'Not seeing,' said Gatsby. 'No, we couldn't meet. But both of us loved each other all that time, old sport, and you didn't know. I used to laugh sometimes' —but there was no laughter in his eyes — 'to think that you didn't know.'

'Oh—that's all.' Tom tapped his thick fingers together like a clergyman and leaned back in his chair.

'You're crazy!' he exploded. 'I can't speak about what happened five years ago, because I didn't know Daisy then—and I'll be damned if I see how you got within a mile of her unless you brought the groceries to the back door. But all the rest of that's a God Damned lie. Daisy loved me when she married me and she loves me now.'

'No,' said Gatsby, shaking his head.

'She does, though. The trouble is that sometimes she gets foolish ideas in her head and doesn't know what she's doing.' He nodded sagely. 'And what's more, I love Daisy too. Once in a while I go off on a spree and make a fool of myself, but I always come back, and

in my heart I love her all the time.'

'You're revolting,' said Daisy. She turned to me, and her voice, dropping an octave lower, filled the room with thrilling scorn: 'Do you know why we left Chicago? I'm surprised that they didn't treat you to the story of that little spree.'

Gatsby walked over and stood beside her.

'Daisy, that's all over now,' he said earnestly. 'It doesn't matter any more. Just tell him the truth—that you never loved him—and it's all wiped out forever.'

She looked at him blindly. 'Why—how could I love him—possibly?'

'You never loved him.'

She hesitated. Her eyes fell on Jordan and me with a sort of appeal, as though she realized at last what she was doing—and as though she had never, all along, intended doing anything at all. But it was done now. It was too late.

'I never loved him,' she said, with perceptible reluctance.

'Not at Kapiolani?' demanded Tom suddenly.

'No.'

From the ballroom beneath, muffled and suffocating chords were

drifting up on hot waves of air.

'Not that day I carried you down from the Punch Bowl to keep your shoes dry?' There was a husky tenderness in his tone ...

'Daisy?'

'Please don't.' Her voice was cold, but the rancour was gone from it. She looked at Gatsby. 'There, Jay,' she said—but her hand as she tried to light a cigarette was trembling. Suddenly she threw the cigarette and the burning match on the carpet.

'Oh, you want too much!' she cried to Gatsby. 'I love you now— isn't that enough? I can't help what's past.' She began to sob helplessly. 'I did love him once—but I loved you too.'

Gatsby's eyes opened and closed.

'You loved me too?' he repeated.

'Even that's a lie,' said Tom savagely. 'She didn't know you were alive. Why—there're things between Daisy and me that you'll never know, things that neither of us can ever forget.'

The words seemed to bite physically into Gatsby.

'I want to speak to Daisy alone,' he insisted. 'She's all excited now —'

'Even alone I can't say I never loved Tom,' she admitted in a pitiful voice. 'It wouldn't be true.'

'Of course it wouldn't,' agreed Tom.

She turned to her husband.

'As if it mattered to you,' she said.

'Of course it matters. I'm going to take better care of you from now on.'

'You don't understand,' said Gatsby, with a touch of panic.

'You're not going to take care of her any more.'

'I'm not?' Tom opened his eyes wide and laughed. He could afford to control himself now. 'Why's that?'

'Daisy's leaving you.'

'Nonsense.'

'I am, though,' she said with a visible effort.

'She's not leaving me!' Tom's words suddenly leaned down over Gatsby. 'Certainly not for a common swindler who'd have to steal the ring he put on her finger.'

'I won't stand this!' cried Daisy. 'Oh, please let's get out.'

'Who are you,anyhow?' broke out Tom. 'You're one of that bunch that hangs around with Meyer Wolfshiem—that much I happen to know. I've made a little investigation into your affairs—and I'll carry it further to-morrow.'

'You can suit yourself about that,old sport.' said Gatsby steadily.

'I found out what your "drug-stores" were.' He turned to us and spoke rapidly. 'He and this Wolfshiem bought up a lot of side-street drug-stores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter. That's one of his little stunts. I picked him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him and I wasn't far wrong.'

'What about it?' said Gatsby politely. 'I guess your friend Walter Chase wasn't too proud to come in on it.'

'And you left him in the lurch,didn't you? You let him go to jail for a month over in New Jersey. God! You ought to hear Walter on the subject of you.'

'He came to us dead broke. He was very glad to pick up some money,old sport.'

'Don't you call me "old sport" !' cried Tom. Gatsby said nothing. 'Walter could have you up on the betting laws too,but Wolfshiem scared him into shutting his mouth.'

That unfamiliar yet recognizable look was back again in Gatsby's face.

'That drug-store business was just small change,' continued Tom slowly, 'but you've got something on now that Walter's afraid to tell me about.'

I glanced at Daisy, who was staring terrified between Gatsby and her husband, and at Jordan, who had begun to balance an invisible but absorbing object on the tip of her chin. Then I turned back to Gatsby—and was startled at his expression. He looked—and this is said in all contempt for the babbled slander of his garden—as if he had 'killed a man.' For a moment the set of his face could be described in just that fantastic way.

It passed, and he began to talk excitedly to Daisy, denying everything, defending his name against accusations that had not been made. But with every word she was drawing further and further into herself, so he gave that up, and only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible, struggling unhappily, undespairingly, toward that lost voice across the room.

The voice begged again to go.

'Please, Tom! I can't stand this any more.'

Her frightened eyes told that whatever intentions, whatever courage she had had, were definitely gone.

'You two start on home, Daisy,' said Tom. 'In Mr. Gatsby's car.'

She looked at Tom, alarmed now, but he insisted with magnanimous scorn.

'Go on. He won't annoy you. I think he realizes that his presumptuous little flirtation is over.'

They were gone, without a word, snapped out, made accidental, isolated, like ghosts, even from our pity.

After a moment Tom got up and began wrapping the unopened bottle of whiskey in the towel.

'Want any of this stuff? Jordan? ... Nick?'

I didn't answer.

'Nick?' He asked again.

'What?'

'Want any?'

'No ... I just remembered that today's my birthday.'

I was thirty. Before me stretched the portentous, menacing road of a

new decade.

It was seven o'clock when we got into the coupé with him and started for Long Island. Tom talked incessantly, exulting and laughing, but his voice was as remote from Jordan and me as the foreign clamor on the sidewalk or the tumult of the elevated overhead. Human sympathy has its limits, and we were content to let all their tragic arguments fade with the city lights behind. Thirty—the promise of a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning brief-case of enthusiasm, thinning hair. But there was Jordan beside me, who, unlike Daisy, was too wise ever to carry well-forgotten dreams from age to age. As we passed over the dark bridge her wan face fell lazily against my coat's shoulder and the formidable stroke of thirty died away with the reassuring pressure of her hand.

So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight.

*

The young Greek, Michaelis, who ran the coffee joint beside the ashheaps was the principal witness at the inquest. He had slept through the heat until after five, when he strolled over to the garage, and found George Wilson sick in his office—really sick, pale as his own pale hair and shaking all over. Michaelis advised him to go to bed, but Wilson refused, saying that he'd miss a lot of

business if he did. While his neighbor was trying to persuade him a violent racket broke out overhead.

'I've got my wife locked in up there,' explained Wilson calmly.

'She's going to stay there till the day after to-morrow and then we're going to move away.'

Michaelis was astonished; they had been neighbours for four years, and Wilson had never seemed faintly capable of such a statement. Generally he was one of these worn-out men: when he wasn't working, he sat on a chair in the doorway and stared at the people and the cars that passed along the road. When anyone spoke to him he invariably laughed in an agreeable, colorless way. He was his wife's man and not his own.

So naturally Michaelis tried to find out what had happened, but Wilson wouldn't say a word—instead he began to throw curious, suspicious glances at his visitor and ask him what he'd been doing at certain times on certain days. Just as the latter was getting uneasy, some workmen came past the door bound for his restaurant, and Michaelis took the opportunity to get away, intending to come back later. But he didn't. He supposed he forgot to, that's all. When he came outside again, a little after seven, he was reminded of the conversation because he heard Mrs. Wilson's voice, loud and scolding, downstairs in the garage.

'Beat me!' he heard her cry. 'Throw me down and beat me,you dirty little coward!'

A moment later she rushed out into the dusk,waving her hands and shouting—before he could move from his door the business was over.

The 'death car' as the newspapers called it,didn't stop;it came out of the gathering darkness,wavered tragically for a moment,and then disappeared around the next bend. Michaelis wasn't even sure of its color—he told the first policeman that it was light green. The other car,the one going toward New York,came to rest a hundred yards beyond,and its driver hurried back to where Myrtle Wilson,her life violently extinguished,knelt in the road and mingled her thick dark blood with the dust.

Michaelis and this man reached her first,but when they had torn open her shirtwaist,still damp with perspiration,they saw that her left breast was swinging loose like a flap,and there was no need to listen for the heart beneath. The mouth was wide open and ripped a little at the corners,as though she had choked a little in giving up the tremendous vitality she had stored so long.

*

We saw the three or four automobiles and the crowd when we were still some distance away.

'Wreck!' said Tom. 'That's good.Wilson'll have a little business at last.'

He slowed down,but still without any intention of stopping,until,as we came nearer,the hushed,intent faces of the people at the garage door made him automatically put on the brakes.

'We'll take a look,' he said doubtfully, 'just a look.'

I became aware now of a hollow,wailing sound which issued incessantly from the garage,a sound which as we got out of the coupé and walked toward the door resolved itself into the words 'Oh,my God!' uttered over and over in a gasping moan.

'There's some bad trouble here,' said Tom excitedly.

He reached up on tiptoes and peered over a circle of heads into the garage,which was lit only by a yellow light in a swinging wire basket overhead. Then he made a harsh sound in his throat,and with a violent thrusting movement of his powerful arms pushed his way through.

The circle closed up again with a running murmur of expostulation;it was a minute before I could see anything at all. Then new arrivals disarranged the line,and Jordan and I were pushed suddenly inside.

Myrtle Wilson's body, wrapped in a blanket, and then in another blanket, as though she suffered from a chill in the hot night, lay on a work-table by the wall, and Tom, with his back to us, was bending over it, motionless. Next to him stood a motor-cycle policeman taking down names with much sweat and correction in a little book. At first I couldn't find the source of the high, groaning words that echoed clamorously through the bare garage—then I saw Wilson standing on the raised threshold of his office, swaying back and forth and holding to the doorposts with both hands. Some man was talking to him in a low voice and attempting, from time to time, to lay a hand on his shoulder, but Wilson neither heard nor saw. His eyes would drop slowly from the swinging light to the laden table by the wall, and then jerk back to the light again, and he gave out incessantly his high, horrible call:

'Oh, my Ga-od! O, my Ga-od! Oh, Ga-od! Oh, my Ga-od!'

Presently Tom lifted his head with a jerk and, after staring around the garage with glazed eyes, addressed a mumbled incoherent remark to the policeman.

'M-a-v —' the policeman was saying, '— o —'

'No, r —' corrected the man, 'M-a-v-r-o —'

'Listen to me!' muttered Tom fiercely.

'r —' said the policeman, 'o —'

'g —'

'g —' He looked up as Tom's broad hand fell sharply on his shoulder. 'What you want, fella?'

'What happened?—that's what I want to know.'

'Auto hit her. Ins'tantly killed.'

'Instantly killed,' repeated Tom, staring.

'She ran out ina road. Son-of-a-bitch didn't even stopus car.'

'There was two cars,' said Michaelis, 'one comin', one goin', see?'

'Going where?' asked the policeman keenly.

'One goin' each way. Well, she —' his hand rose toward the blankets but stopped half way and fell to his side— 'she ran out there an' the one comin' from N'York knock right into her, goin' thirty or forty miles an hour.'

'What's the name of this place here?' demanded the officer.

'Hasn't got any name.'

A pale well-dressed Negro stepped near.

'It was a yellow car,' he said, 'big yellow car. New.'

'See the accident?' asked the policeman.

'No, but the car passed me down the road, going faster'n forty. Going fifty, sixty.'

'Come here and let's have your name. Look out now. I want to get his name.'

Some words of this conversation must have reached Wilson, swaying in the office door, for suddenly a new theme found voice among his gasping cries:

'You don't have to tell me what kind of car it was! I know what kind of car it was!'

Watching Tom, I saw the wad of muscle back of his shoulder tighten under his coat. He walked quickly over to Wilson and, standing in front of him seized him, firmly by the upper arms.

'You've got to pull yourself together,' he said with soothing gruffness.

Wilson's eyes fell upon Tom; he started up on his tiptoes and then would have collapsed to his knees had not Tom held him upright.

'Listen,' said Tom, shaking him a little. 'I just got here a

minute ago,from New York. I was bringing you that coupé we've been talking about. That yellow car I was driving this afternoon wasn't mine—do you hear? I haven't seen it all afternoon.'

Only the Negro and I were near enough to hear what he said,but the policeman caught something in the tone and looked over with truculent eyes.

'What's all that?' he demanded.

'I'm a friend of his.' Tom turned his head but kept his hands firm on Wilson's body. 'He says he knows the car that did it ... It was a yellow car.'

Some dim impulse moved the policeman to look suspiciously at Tom.

'And what color's your car?'

'It's a blue car,a coupé.'

'We've come straight from New York,' I said.

Someone who had been driving a little behind us confirmed this,and the policeman turned away.

'Now,if you'll let me have that name again correct —'

Picking up Wilson like a doll,Tom carried him into the office,set him down in a chair,and came back.

'If somebody'll come here and sit with him,' he snapped authoritatively. He watched while the two men standing closest glanced at each other and went unwillingly into the room. Then Tom shut the door on them and came down the single step, his eyes avoiding the table. As he passed close to me he whispered: 'Let's get out.'

Self-consciously, with his authoritative arms breaking the way, we pushed through the still gathering crowd, passing a hurried doctor, case in hand, who had been sent for in wild hope half an hour ago.

Tom drove slowly until we were beyond the bend—then his foot came down hard, and the coupé raced along through the night. In a little while I heard a low husky sob, and saw that the tears were overflowing down his face.

'The God Damn coward!' he whimpered. 'He didn't even stop his car.'

*

The Buchanans' house floated suddenly toward us through the dark rustling trees. Tom stopped beside the porch and looked up at the second floor, where two windows bloomed with light among the vines.

'Daisy's home,' he said. As we got out of the car he glanced at

me and frowned slightly.

'I ought to have dropped you in West Egg,Nick. There's nothing we can do to-night.'

A change had come over him,and he spoke gravely,and with decision. As we walked across the moonlight gravel to the porch he disposed of the situation in a few brisk phrases.

'I'll telephone for a taxi to take you home,and while you're waiting you and Jordan better go in the kitchen and have them get you some supper—if you want any.' He opened the door. 'Come in.'

'No thanks. But I'd be glad if you'd order me the taxi. I'll wait outside.'

Jordan put her hand on my arm.

'Won't you come in,Nick?'

'No,thanks.'

I was feeling a little sick and I wanted to be alone. But Jordan lingered for a moment more.

'It's only half-past nine,' she said.

I'd be damned if I'd go in;I'd had enough of all of them for one

day, and suddenly that included Jordan too. She must have seen something of this in my expression, for she turned abruptly away and ran up the porch steps into the house. I sat down for a few minutes with my head in my hands, until I heard the phone taken up inside and the butler's voice calling a taxi. Then I walked slowly down the drive away from the house, intending to wait by the gate.

I hadn't gone twenty yards when I heard my name and Gatsby stepped from between two bushes into the path. I must have felt pretty weird by that time, because I could think of nothing except the luminosity of his pink suit under the moon.

'What are you doing?' I inquired.

'Just standing here, old sport.'

Somehow, that seemed a despicable occupation. For all I knew he was going to rob the house in a moment; I wouldn't have been surprised to see sinister faces, the faces of 'Wolfshiem's people', behind him in the dark shrubbery.

'Did you see any trouble on the road?' he asked after a minute.

'Yes.'

He hesitated.

'Was she killed?'

'Yes.'

'I thought so;I told Daisy I thought so. It's better that the shock should all come at once. She stood it pretty well.'

He spoke as if Daisy's reaction was the only thing that mattered.

'I got to West Egg by a side road,' he went on, 'and left the car in my garage. I don't think anybody saw us,but of course I can't be sure.'

I disliked him so much by this time that I didn't find it necessary to tell him he was wrong.

'Who was the woman?' he inquired.

'Her name was Wilson. Her husband owns the garage. How the devil did it happen?'

'Well,I tried to swing the wheel —' He broke off,and suddenly I guessed at the truth.

'Was Daisy driving?'

'Yes,' he said after a moment, 'but of course I'll say I was. You see,when we left New York she was very nervous and she thought it would steady her to drive—and this woman rushed out at us just as we were passing a car coming the other way. It all happened in a

minute, but it seemed to me that she wanted to speak to us, thought we were somebody she knew. Well, first Daisy turned away from the woman toward the other car, and then she lost her nerve and turned back. The second my hand reached the wheel I felt the shock—it must have killed her instantly.'

'It ripped her open —'

'Don't tell me, old sport.' He winced. 'Anyhow—Daisy stepped on it. I tried to make her stop, but she couldn't so I pulled on the emergency brake. Then she fell over into my lap and I drove on.'

'She'll be all right to-morrow,' he said presently. 'I'm just going to wait here and see if he tries to bother her about that unpleasantness this afternoon. She's locked herself into her room, and if he tries any brutality she's going to turn the light out and on again.'

'He won't touch her,' I said. 'He's not thinking about her.'

'I don't trust him, old sport.'

'How long are you going to wait?'

'All night if necessary. Anyhow, till they all go to bed.'

A new point of view occurred to me. Suppose Tom found out that Daisy had been driving. He might think he saw a connection in it—

he might think anything. I looked at the house; there were two or three bright windows downstairs and the pink glow from Daisy's room on the second floor.

'You wait here,' I said. 'I'll see if there's any sign of a commotion.'

I walked back along the border of the lawn, traversed the gravel softly, and tiptoed up the veranda steps. The drawing-room curtains were open, and I saw that the room was empty. Crossing the porch where we had dined that June night three months before, I came to a small rectangle of light which I guessed was the pantry window. The blind was drawn, but I found a rift at the sill.

Daisy and Tom were sitting opposite each other at the kitchen table, with a plate of cold fried chicken between them, and two bottles of ale. He was talking intently across the table at her, and in his earnestness his hand had fallen upon and covered her own. Once in a while she looked up at him and nodded in agreement.

They weren't happy, and neither of them had touched the chicken or the ale—and yet they weren't unhappy either. There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture, and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together.

As I tiptoed from the porch I heard my taxi feeling its way along

the dark road toward the house. Gatsby was waiting where I had left him in the drive.

'Is it all quiet up there?' he asked anxiously.

'Yes, it's all quiet.' I hesitated. 'You'd better come home and get some sleep.'

He shook his head.

'I want to wait here till Daisy goes to bed. Good night, old sport.'

He put his hands in his coat pockets and turned back eagerly to his scrutiny of the house, as though my presence marred the sacredness of the vigil. So I walked away and left him standing there in the moonlight—watching over nothing.

Chapter Eight

I couldn't sleep all night;a fog-horn was groaning incessantly on the Sound,and I tossed half-sick between grotesque reality and savage,frightening dreams. Toward dawn I heard a taxi go up Gatsby's drive,and immediately I jumped out of bed and began to dress—I felt that I had something to tell him,something to warn him about,and morning would be too late.

Crossing his lawn,I saw that his front door was still open and he was leaning against a table in the hall,heavy with dejection or sleep.

‘Nothing happened,’ he said wanly. ‘I waited,and about four o'clock she came to the window and stood there for a minute and then turned out the light.’

His house had never seemed so enormous to me as it did that night when we hunted through the great rooms for cigarettes. We pushed aside curtains that were like pavilions,and felt over innumerable feet of dark wall for electric light switches—once I tumbled with a sort of splash upon the keys of a ghostly piano. There was an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere and the rooms were musty,as though they hadn't been aired for many days. I found the humidors on an unfamiliar table,with two stale,dry cigarettes inside. Throwing

open the french windows of the drawing-room,we sat smoking out into the darkness.

'You ought to go away,' I said. 'It's pretty certain they'll trace your car.'

'Go away now,old sport?'

'Go to Atlantic City for a week,or up to Montreal.'

He wouldn't consider it. He couldn't possibly leave Daisy until he knew what she was going to do. He was clutching at some last hope and I couldn't bear to shake him free.

It was this night that he told me the strange story of his youth with Dan Cody—told it to me because 'Jay Gatsby' had broken up like glass against Tom's hard malice,and the long secret extravaganza was played out. I think that he would have acknowledged anything now,without reserve,but he wanted to talk about Daisy.

She was the first 'nice' girl he had ever known. In various unrevealed capacities he had come in contact with such people,but always with indiscernible barbed wire between. He found her excitingly desirable. He went to her house,at first with other officers from Camp Taylor,then alone. It amazed him—he had never been in such a beautiful house before. But what gave it an air of

breathless intensity, was that Daisy lived there—it was as casual a thing to her as his tent out at camp was to him. There was a ripe mystery about it, a hint of bedrooms upstairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors, and of romances that were not musty and laid away already in lavender but fresh and breathing and redolent of this year's shining motor-cars and of dances whose flowers were scarcely withered. It excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy—it increased her value in his eyes. He felt their presence all about the house, pervading the air with the shades and echoes of still vibrant emotions.

But he knew that he was in Daisy's house by a colossal accident. However glorious might be his future as Jay Gatsby, he was at present a penniless young man without a past, and at any moment the invisible cloak of his uniform might slip from his shoulders. So he made the most of his time. He took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously—eventually he took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand.

He might have despised himself, for he had certainly taken her under false pretenses. I don't mean that he had traded on his phantom millions, but he had deliberately given Daisy a sense of security; he let her believe that he was a person from much the same strata as herself—that he was fully able to take care of her. As a matter of

fact,he had no such facilities—he had no comfortable family standing behind him,and he was liable at the whim of an impersonal government to be blown anywhere about the world.

But he didn't despise himself and it didn't turn out as he had imagined. He had intended,probably,to take what he could and go—but now he found that he had committed himself to the following of a grail. He knew that Daisy was extraordinary,but he didn't realize just how extraordinary a 'nice' girl could be. She vanished into her rich house,into her rich,full life,leaving Gatsby—nothing. He felt married to her,that was all.

When they met again,two days later,it was Gatsby who was breathless,who was,somehow,betrayed. Her porch was bright with the bought luxury of star-shine;the wicker of the settee squeaked fashionably as she turned toward him and he kissed her curious and lovely mouth. She had caught a cold,and it made her voice huskier and more charming than ever,and Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves,of the freshness of many clothes,and of Daisy,gleaming like silver,safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor.

*

'I can't describe to you how surprised I was to find out I loved her,old sport. I even hoped for a while that she'd throw me

over, but she didn't, because she was in love with me too. She thought I knew a lot because I knew different things from her ... Well, there I was, 'way off my ambitions, getting deeper in love every minute, and all of a sudden I didn't care. What was the use of doing great things if I could have a better time telling her what I was going to do?'

On the last afternoon before he went abroad, he sat with Daisy in his arms for a long, silent time. It was a cold fall day, with fire in the room and her cheeks flushed. Now and then she moved and he changed his arm a little, and once he kissed her dark shining hair. The afternoon had made them tranquil for a while, as if to give them a deep memory for the long parting the next day promised. They had never been closer in their month of love, nor communicated more profoundly one with another, than when she brushed silent lips against his coat's shoulder or when he touched the end of her fingers, gently, as though she were asleep.

*

He did extraordinarily well in the war. He was a captain before he went to the front, and following the Argonne battles he got his majority and the command of the divisional machine-guns. After the armistice he tried frantically to get home, but some complication or misunderstanding sent him to Oxford instead. He was worried now—

there was a quality of nervous despair in Daisy's letters. She didn't see why he couldn't come. She was feeling the pressure of the world outside, and she wanted to see him and feel his presence beside her and be reassured that she was doing the right thing after all.

For Daisy was young and her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes. All night the saxophones wailed the hopeless comment of the 'Beale Street Blues' while a hundred pairs of golden and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust. At the grey tea hour there were always rooms that throbbed incessantly with this low, sweet fever, while fresh faces drifted here and there like rose petals blown by the sad horns around the floor.

Through this twilight universe Daisy began to move again with the season; suddenly she was again keeping half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men, and drowsing asleep at dawn with the beads and chiffon of an evening dress tangled among dying orchids on the floor beside her bed. And all the time something within her was crying for a decision. She wanted her life shaped now, immediately—and the decision must be made by some force—of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality—that was close at hand.

That force took shape in the middle of spring with the arrival of Tom Buchanan. There was a wholesome bulkiness about his person and his position, and Daisy was flattered. Doubtless there was a certain struggle and a certain relief. The letter reached Gatsby while he was still at Oxford.

*

It was dawn now on Long Island and we went about opening the rest of the windows downstairs, filling the house with grey-turning, gold-turning light. The shadow of a tree fell abruptly across the dew and ghostly birds began to sing among the blue leaves. There was a slow, pleasant movement in the air, scarcely a wind, promising a cool, lovely day.

'I don't think she ever loved him.' Gatsby turned around from a window and looked at me challengingly. 'You must remember, old sport, she was very excited this afternoon. He told her those things in a way that frightened her—that made it look as if I was some kind of cheap sharper. And the result was she hardly knew what she was saying.'

He sat down gloomily.

'Of course she might have loved him just for a minute, when they were first married—and loved me more even then, do you see?'

Suddenly he came out with a curious remark:

‘In any case,’ he said, ‘it was just personal.’

What could you make of that, except to suspect some intensity in his conception of the affair that couldn't be measured?

He came back from France when Tom and Daisy were still on their wedding trip, and made a miserable but irresistible journey to Louisville on the last of his army pay. He stayed there a week, walking the streets where their footsteps had clicked together through the November night and revisiting the out-of-the-way places to which they had driven in her white car. Just as Daisy's house had always seemed to him more mysterious and gay than other houses, so his idea of the city itself, even though she was gone from it, was pervaded with a melancholy beauty.

He left feeling that if he had searched harder, he might have found her—that he was leaving her behind. The day-coach—he was penniless now—was hot. He went out to the open vestibule and sat down on a folding-chair, and the station slid away and the backs of unfamiliar buildings moved by. Then out into the spring fields, where a yellow trolley raced them for a minute with people in it who might once have seen the pale magic of her face along the casual street.

The track curved and now it was going away from the sun, which, as it sank lower, seemed to spread itself in benediction over the vanishing city where she had drawn her breath. He stretched out his hand desperately as if to snatch only a wisp of air, to save a fragment of the spot that she had made lovely for him. But it was all going by too fast now for his blurred eyes and he knew that he had lost that part of it, the freshest and the best, forever.

It was nine o'clock when we finished breakfast and went out on the porch. The night had made a sharp difference in the weather and there was an autumn flavor in the air. The gardener, the last one of Gatsby's former servants, came to the foot of the steps.

'I'm going to drain the pool to-day, Mr. Gatsby. Leaves'll start falling pretty soon, and then there's always trouble with the pipes.'

'Don't do it to-day,' Gatsby answered. He turned to me apologetically. 'You know, old sport, I've never used that pool all summer?'

I looked at my watch and stood up.

'Twelve minutes to my train.'

I didn't want to go to the city. I wasn't worth a decent stroke of work, but it was more than that—I didn't want to leave Gatsby. I

missed that train, and then another, before I could get myself away.

'I'll call you up,' I said finally.

'Do, old sport.'

'I'll call you about noon.'

We walked slowly down the steps.

'I suppose Daisy'll call too.' He looked at me anxiously, as if he hoped I'd corroborate this.

'I suppose so.'

'Well, good-bye.'

We shook hands and I started away. Just before I reached the hedge I remembered something and turned around.

'They're a rotten crowd,' I shouted across the lawn. 'You're worth the whole damn bunch put together.'

I've always been glad I said that. It was the only compliment I ever gave him, because I disapproved of him from beginning to end. First he nodded politely, and then his face broke into that radiant and understanding smile, as if we'd been in ecstatic cahoots on that fact all the time. His gorgeous pink rag of a suit made a bright spot of color against the white steps, and I thought of the night

when I first came to his ancestral home,three months before. The lawn and drive had been crowded with the faces of those who guessed at his corruption—and he had stood on those steps,concealing his incorruptible dream,as he waved them good-bye.

I thanked him for his hospitality. We were always thanking him for that—I and the others.

‘Good-bye,’ I called. ‘I enjoyed breakfast,Gatsby.’

*

Up in the city,I tried for a while to list the quotations on an interminable amount of stock,then I fell asleep in my swivel-chair. Just before noon the phone woke me,and I started up with sweat breaking out on my forehead. It was Jordan Baker;she often called me up at this hour because the uncertainty of her own movements between hotels and clubs and private houses made her hard to find in any other way. Usually her voice came over the wire as something fresh and cool,as if a divot from a green golf-links had come sailing in at the office window,but this morning it seemed harsh and dry.

‘I've left Daisy's house,’ she said. ‘I'm at Hempstead,and I'm going down to Southampton this afternoon.’

Probably it had been tactful to leave Daisy's house,but the act

annoyed me, and her next remark made me rigid.

'You weren't so nice to me last night.'

'How could it have mattered then?'

Silence for a moment. Then:

'However—I want to see you.'

'I want to see you, too.'

'Suppose I don't go to Southampton, and come into town this afternoon?'

'No—I don't think this afternoon.'

'Very well.'

'It's impossible this afternoon. Various —'

We talked like that for a while, and then abruptly we weren't talking any longer. I don't know which of us hung up with a sharp click, but I know I didn't care. I couldn't have talked to her across a tea-table that day if I never talked to her again in this world.

I called Gatsby's house a few minutes later, but the line was busy. I tried four times; finally an exasperated central told me the wire

was being kept open for long distance from Detroit. Taking out my time-table,I drew a small circle around the three-fifty train. Then I leaned back in my chair and tried to think. It was just noon.

*

When I passed the ashheaps on the train that morning I had crossed deliberately to the other side of the car. I supposed there'd be a curious crowd around there all day with little boys searching for dark spots in the dust,and some garrulous man telling over and over what had happened,until it became less and less real even to him and he could tell it no longer,and Myrtle Wilson's tragic achievement was forgotten. Now I want to go back a little and tell what happened at the garage after we left there the night before.

They had difficulty in locating the sister,Catherine. She must have broken her rule against drinking that night,for when she arrived she was stupid with liquor and unable to understand that the ambulance had already gone to Flushing. When they convinced her of this she immediately fainted,as if that was the intolerable part of the affair. Someone,kind or curious,took her in his car and drove her in the wake of her sister's body.

Until long after midnight a changing crowd lapped up against the front of the garage,while George Wilson rocked himself back and forth on the couch inside. For a while the door of the office was

open, and everyone who came into the garage glanced irresistibly through it. Finally someone said it was a shame, and closed the door. Michaelis and several other men were with him; first, four or five men, later two or three men. Still later Michaelis had to ask the last stranger to wait there fifteen minutes longer, while he went back to his own place and made a pot of coffee. After that, he stayed there alone with Wilson until dawn.

About three o'clock the quality of Wilson's incoherent muttering changed—he grew quieter and began to talk about the yellow car. He announced that he had a way of finding out whom the yellow car belonged to, and then he blurted out that a couple of months ago his wife had come from the city with her face bruised and her nose swollen.

But when he heard himself say this, he flinched and began to cry 'Oh, my God!' again in his groaning voice. Michaelis made a clumsy attempt to distract him.

'How long have you been married, George? Come on there, try and sit still a minute and answer my question. How long have you been married?'

'Twelve years.'

'Ever had any children? Come on, George, sit still—I asked you a

question. Did you ever have any children?’

The hard brown beetles kept thudding against the dull light, and whenever Michaelis heard a car go tearing along the road outside it sounded to him like the car that hadn't stopped a few hours before. He didn't like to go into the garage, because the work bench was stained where the body had been lying, so he moved uncomfortably around the office—he knew every object in it before morning—and from time to time sat down beside Wilson trying to keep him more quiet.

‘Have you got a church you go to sometimes, George? Maybe even if you haven't been there for a long time? Maybe I could call up the church and get a priest to come over and he could talk to you, see?’

‘Don't belong to any.’

‘You ought to have a church, George, for times like this. You must have gone to church once. Didn't you get married in a church? Listen, George, listen to me. Didn't you get married in a church?’

‘That was a long time ago.’

The effort of answering broke the rhythm of his rocking—for a moment he was silent. Then the same half-knowing, half-bewildered look came back into his faded eyes.

'Look in the drawer there,' he said, pointing at the desk.

'Which drawer?'

'That drawer—that one.'

Michaelis opened the drawer nearest his hand. There was nothing in it but a small, expensive dog-leash, made of leather and braided silver. It was apparently new.

'This?' he inquired, holding it up.

Wilson stared and nodded.

'I found it yesterday afternoon. She tried to tell me about it but I knew it was something funny.'

'You mean your wife bought it?'

'She had it wrapped in tissue paper on her bureau.'

Michaelis didn't see anything odd in that, and he gave Wilson a dozen reasons why his wife might have bought the dog-leash. But conceivably Wilson had heard some of these same explanations before, from Myrtle, because he began saying 'Oh, my God!' again in a whisper—his comforter left several explanations in the air.

'Then he killed her,' said Wilson. His mouth dropped open suddenly.

'Who did?'

'I have a way of finding out.'

'You're morbid,George,' said his friend. 'This has been a strain to you and you don't know what you're saying. You'd better try and sit quiet till morning.'

'He murdered her.'

'It was an accident,George.'

Wilson shook his head. His eyes narrowed and his mouth widened slightly with the ghost of a superior 'Hm!'

'I know,' he said definitely, 'I'm one of these trusting fellas and I don't think any harm to nobody,but when I get to know a thing I know it. It was the man in that car. She ran out to speak to him and he wouldn't stop.'

Michaelis had seen this too,but it hadn't occurred to him that there was any special significance in it. He believed that Mrs.Wilson had been running away from her husband,rather than trying to stop any particular car.

'How could she of been like that?'

'She's a deep one,' said Wilson,as if that answered the question.

'Ah-h-h —'

He began to rock again, and Michaelis stood twisting the leash in his hand.

'Maybe you got some friend that I could telephone for, George?'

This was a forlorn hope—he was almost sure that Wilson had no friend: there was not enough of him for his wife. He was glad a little later when he noticed a change in the room, a blue quickening by the window, and realized that dawn wasn't far off. About five o'clock it was blue enough outside to snap off the light.

Wilson's glazed eyes turned out to the ashheaps, where small grey clouds took on fantastic shape and scurried here and there in the faint dawn wind.

'I spoke to her,' he muttered, after a long silence. 'I told her she might fool me but she couldn't fool God. I took her to the window' —with an effort he got up and walked to the rear window and leaned with his face pressed against it— 'and I said "God knows what you've been doing, everything you've been doing. You may fool me, but you can't fool God!" '

Standing behind him, Michaelis saw with a shock that he was looking at the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which had just emerged, pale and enormous, from the dissolving night.

'God sees everything,' repeated Wilson.

'That's an advertisement,' Michaelis assured him. Something made him turn away from the window and look back into the room. But Wilson stood there a long time, his face close to the window pane, nodding into the twilight.

*

By six o'clock Michaelis was worn out, and grateful for the sound of a car stopping outside. It was one of the watchers of the night before who had promised to come back, so he cooked breakfast for three, which he and the other man ate together. Wilson was quieter now, and Michaelis went home to sleep; when he awoke four hours later and hurried back to the garage, Wilson was gone.

His movements—he was on foot all the time—were afterward traced to Port Roosevelt and then to Gad's Hill, where he bought a sandwich that he didn't eat, and a cup of coffee. He must have been tired and walking slowly, for he didn't reach Gad's Hill until noon. Thus far there was no difficulty in accounting for his time—there were boys who had seen a man 'acting sort of crazy', and motorists at whom he stared oddly from the side of the road. Then for three hours he disappeared from view. The police, on the strength of what he said to Michaelis, that he 'had a way of finding out', supposed that he spent that time going from garage to garage thereabout, inquiring

for a yellow car. On the other hand, no garage man who had seen him ever came forward, and perhaps he had an easier, surer way of finding out what he wanted to know. By half-past two he was in West Egg, where he asked someone the way to Gatsby's house. So by that time he knew Gatsby's name.

*

At two o'clock Gatsby put on his bathing-suit and left word with the butler that if anyone phoned word was to be brought to him at the pool. He stopped at the garage for a pneumatic mattress that had amused his guests during the summer, and the chauffeur helped him pump it up. Then he gave instructions that the open car wasn't to be taken out under any circumstances—and this was strange, because the front right fender needed repair.

Gatsby shouldered the mattress and started for the pool. Once he stopped and shifted it a little, and the chauffeur asked him if he needed help, but he shook his head and in a moment disappeared among the yellowing trees.

No telephone message arrived, but the butler went without his sleep and waited for it until four o'clock—until long after there was anyone to give it to if it came. I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come, and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm

world,paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world,material without being real,where poor ghosts,breathing dreams like air,drifted fortuitously about ... like that ashen,fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees.

The chauffeur—he was one of Wolfshiem's protégés—heard the shots —afterward he could only say that he hadn't thought anything much about them. I drove from the station directly to Gatsby's house and my rushing anxiously up the front steps was the first thing that alarmed anyone. But they knew then,I firmly believe. With scarcely a word said,four of us,the chauffeur,butler,gardener,and I,hurried down to the pool.

There was a faint,barely perceptible movement of the water as the fresh flow from one end urged its way toward the drain at the other. With little ripples that were hardly the shadows of waves,the laden mattress moved irregularly down the pool. A small gust of wind that scarcely corrugated the surface was enough to disturb its accidental course with its accidental burden. The touch of a cluster of leaves revolved it slowly,tracing,like the leg of transit,a thin red circle in the water.

It was after we started with Gatsby toward the house that the gardener saw Wilson's body a little way off in the grass, and the holocaust was complete.

Chapter Nine

After two years I remember the rest of that day, and that night and the next day, only as an endless drill of police and photographers and newspaper men in and out of Gatsby's front door. A rope stretched across the main gate and a policeman by it kept out the curious, but little boys soon discovered that they could enter through my yard, and there were always a few of them clustered open-mouthed about the pool. Someone with a positive manner, perhaps a detective, used the expression 'madman' as he bent over Wilson's body that afternoon, and the adventitious authority of his voice set the key for the newspaper reports next morning.

Most of those reports were a nightmare—grotesque, circumstantial, eager, and untrue. When Michaelis's testimony at the inquest brought to light Wilson's suspicions of his wife I thought the whole tale would shortly be served up in racy pasquinade—but Catherine, who might have said anything, didn't say a word. She showed a surprising amount of character about it too—looked at the coroner with determined eyes under that corrected brow of hers, and swore that her sister had never seen Gatsby, that her sister was completely happy with her husband, that her sister had been into no mischief whatever. She convinced herself of it, and cried into her handkerchief, as if the very

suggestion was more than she could endure. So Wilson was reduced to a man 'deranged by grief' in order that the case might remain in its simplest form. And it rested there.

But all this part of it seemed remote and unessential. I found myself on Gatsby's side, and alone. From the moment I telephoned news of the catastrophe to West Egg village, every surmise about him, and every practical question, was referred to me. At first I was surprised and confused; then, as he lay in his house and didn't move or breathe or speak, hour upon hour, it grew upon me that I was responsible, because no one else was interested—interested, I mean, with that intense personal interest to which everyone has some vague right at the end.

I called up Daisy half an hour after we found him, called her instinctively and without hesitation. But she and Tom had gone away early that afternoon, and taken baggage with them.

'Left no address?'

'No.'

'Say when they'd be back?'

'No.'

'Any idea where they are? How I could reach them?'

'I don't know. Can't say.'

I wanted to get somebody for him. I wanted to go into the room where he lay and reassure him: 'I'll get somebody for you,Gatsby. Don't worry. Just trust me and I'll get somebody for you —'

Meyer Wolfshiem's name wasn't in the phone book. The butler gave me his office address on Broadway,and I called Information,but by the time I had the number it was long after five,and no one answered the phone.

'Will you ring again?'

'I've rung them three times.'

'It's very important.'

'Sorry. I'm afraid no one's there.'

I went back to the drawing-room and thought for an instant that they were chance visitors,all these official people who suddenly filled it. But,though they drew back the sheet and looked at Gatsby with shocked eyes,his protest continued in my brain:

'Look here,old sport,you've got to get somebody for me. You've got to try hard. I can't go through this alone.'

Someone started to ask me questions,but I broke away and going

upstairs looked hastily through the unlocked parts of his desk—he'd never told me definitely that his parents were dead. But there was nothing—only the picture of Dan Cody, a token of forgotten violence, staring down from the wall.

Next morning I sent the butler to New York with a letter to Wolfshiem, which asked for information and urged him to come out on the next train. That request seemed superfluous when I wrote it. I was sure he'd start when he saw the newspapers, just as I was sure there'd be a wire from Daisy before noon—but neither a wire nor Mr. Wolfshiem arrived; no one arrived except more police and photographers and newspaper men. When the butler brought back Wolfshiem's answer I began to have a feeling of defiance, of scornful solidarity between Gatsby and me against them all.

Dear Mr. Carraway. This has been one of the most terrible shocks of my life to me I hardly can believe it that it is true at all. Such a mad act as that man did should make us all think. I cannot come down now as I am tied up in some very important business and cannot get mixed up in this thing now. If there is anything I can do a little later let me know in a letter by Edgar. I hardly know where I am when I hear about a thing like this and am completely knocked down and out.

Yours truly

MEYER WOLFSCIEM

and then hasty addenda beneath:

Let me know about the funeral etc do not know his family at all.

When the phone rang that afternoon and Long Distance said Chicago was calling I thought this would be Daisy at last. But the connection came through as a man's voice, very thin and far away.

'This is Slagle speaking ... '

'Yes?' The name was unfamiliar.

'Hell of a note, isn't it? Get my wire?'

'There haven't been any wires.'

'Young Parke's in trouble,' he said rapidly. 'They picked him up when he handed the bonds over the counter. They got a circular from New York giving 'em the numbers just five minutes before. What d'you know about that, hey? You never can tell in these hick towns —'

'Hello!' I interrupted breathlessly. 'Look here—this isn't Mr. Gatsby. Mr. Gatsby's dead.'

There was a long silence on the other end of the wire, followed by an exclamation ... then a quick squawk as the connection was

broken.

*

I think it was on the third day that a telegram signed Henry C.Gatz arrived from a town in Minnesota. It said only that the sender was leaving immediately and to postpone the funeral until he came.

It was Gatsby's father,a solemn old man,very helpless and dismayed,bundled up in a long cheap ulster against the warm September day. His eyes leaked continuously with excitement,and when I took the bag and umbrella from his hands he began to pull so incessantly at his sparse grey beard that I had difficulty in getting off his coat. He was on the point of collapse,so I took him into the music room and made him sit down while I sent for something to eat. But he wouldn't eat,and the glass of milk spilled from his trembling hand.

'I saw it in the Chicago newspaper,' he said. 'It was all in the Chicago newspaper. I started right away.'

'I didn't know how to reach you.'

His eyes,seeing nothing,moved ceaselessly about the room.

'It was a madman,' he said. 'He must have been mad.'

'Wouldn't you like some coffee?' I urged him.

'I don't want anything. I'm all right now,Mr. —'

'Carraway.'

'Well,I'm all right now. Where have they got Jimmy?'

I took him into the drawing-room,where his son lay,and left him there. Some little boys had come up on the steps and were looking into the hall;when I told them who had arrived,they went reluctantly away.

After a little while Mr.Gatz opened the door and came out,his mouth ajar,his face flushed slightly,his eyes leaking isolated and unpunctual tears. He had reached an age where death no longer has the quality of ghastly surprise,and when he looked around him now for the first time and saw the height and splendor of the hall and the great rooms opening out from it into other rooms,his grief began to be mixed with an awed pride. I helped him to a bedroom upstairs;while he took off his coat and vest I told him that all arrangements had been deferred until he came.

'I didn't know what you'd want,Mr.Gatsby —'

'Gatz is my name.'

'— Mr.Gatz. I thought you might want to take the body West.'

He shook his head.

'Jimmy always liked it better down East. He rose up to his position in the East. Were you a friend of my boy's, Mr. —?'

'We were close friends.'

'He had a big future before him, you know. He was only a young man, but he had a lot of brain power here.'

He touched his head impressively, and I nodded.

'If he'd of lived, he'd of been a great man. A man like James J. Hill. He'd of helped build up the country.'

'That's true,' I said, uncomfortably.

He fumbled at the embroidered coverlet, trying to take it from the bed, and lay down stiffly—was instantly asleep.

That night an obviously frightened person called up, and demanded to know who I was before he would give his name.

'This is Mr. Carraway,' I said.

'Oh!' He sounded relieved. 'This is Klipspringer.'

I was relieved too, for that seemed to promise another friend at Gatsby's grave. I didn't want it to be in the papers and draw a sightseeing crowd, so I'd been calling up a few people myself. They were hard to find.

'The funeral's to-morrow,' I said. 'Three o'clock, here at the house. I wish you'd tell anybody who'd be interested.'

'Oh, I will,' he broke out hastily. 'Of course I'm not likely to see anybody, but if I do.'

His tone made me suspicious.

'Of course you'll be there yourself.'

'Well, I'll certainly try. What I called up about is —'

'Wait a minute,' I interrupted. 'How about saying you'll come?'

'Well, the fact is—the truth of the matter is that I'm staying with some people up here in Greenwich, and they rather expect me to be with them to-morrow. In fact, there's a sort of picnic or something. Of course I'll do my very best to get away.'

I ejaculated an unrestrained 'Huh!' and he must have heard me, for he went on nervously:

'What I called up about was a pair of shoes I left there. I wonder if it'd be too much trouble to have the butler send them on. You see, they're tennis shoes, and I'm sort of helpless without them. My address is care of B. F. —'

I didn't hear the rest of the name, because I hung up the receiver.

After that I felt a certain shame for Gatsby—one gentleman to whom I telephoned implied that he had got what he deserved. However, that was my fault, for he was one of those who used to sneer most bitterly at Gatsby on the courage of Gatsby's liquor, and I should have known better than to call him.

The morning of the funeral I went up to New York to see Meyer Wolfshiem; I couldn't seem to reach him any other way. The door that I pushed open, on the advice of an elevator boy, was marked 'The Swastika Holding Company', and at first there didn't seem to be anyone inside. But when I'd shouted 'hello' several times in vain, an argument broke out behind a partition, and presently a lovely Jewess appeared at an interior door and scrutinized me with black hostile eyes.

'Nobody's in,' she said. 'Mr. Wolfshiem's gone to Chicago.'

The first part of this was obviously untrue, for someone had begun to whistle 'The Rosary', tunelessly, inside.

'Please say that Mr. Carraway wants to see him.'

'I can't get him back from Chicago, can I?'

At this moment a voice, unmistakably Wolfshiem's, called 'Stella!' from the other side of the door.

'Leave your name on the desk,' she said quickly. 'I'll give it to him when he gets back.'

'But I know he's there.'

She took a step toward me and began to slide her hands indignantly up and down her hips.

'You young men think you can force your way in here any time,' she scolded. 'We're getting sickantired of it. When I say he's in Chicago,he's in Chicago.'

I mentioned Gatsby.

'Oh-h!' She looked at me over again. 'Will you just—What was your name?'

She vanished. In a moment Meyer Wolfshiem stood solemnly in the doorway,holding out both hands. He drew me into his office,remarking in a reverent voice that it was a sad time for all of us,and offered me a cigar.

'My memory goes back to when I first met him,' he said. 'A young major just out of the army and covered over with medals he got in the war. He was so hard up he had to keep on wearing his uniform because he couldn't buy some regular clothes. First time I saw him was when he come into Winebrenner's poolroom at Forty-third Street

and asked for a job. He hadn't eat anything for a couple of days.

"Come on have some lunch with me," I sid. He ate more than four dollars' worth of food in half an hour.'

'Did you start him in business?' I inquired.

'Start him! I made him.'

'Oh.'

'I raised him up out of nothing, right out of the gutter. I saw right away he was a fine-appearing, gentlemanly young man, and when he told me he was an Oggsford I knew I could use him good. I got him to join up in the American Legion and he used to stand high there. Right off he did some work for a client of mine up to Albany. We were so thick like that in everything' —he held up two bulbous fingers— 'always together.'

I wondered if this partnership had included the World's Series transaction in 1919.

'Now he's dead,' I said after a moment. 'You were his closest friend, so I know you'll want to come to his funeral this afternoon.'

'I'd like to come.'

'Well, come then.'

The hair in his nostrils quivered slightly, and as he shook his head his eyes filled with tears.

'I can't do it—I can't get mixed up in it,' he said.

'There's nothing to get mixed up in. It's all over now.'

'When a man gets killed I never like to get mixed up in it in any way. I keep out. When I was a young man it was different—if a friend of mine died, no matter how, I stuck with them to the end. You may think that's sentimental, but I mean it—to the bitter end.'

I saw that for some reason of his own he was determined not to come, so I stood up.

'Are you a college man?' he inquired suddenly.

For a moment I thought he was going to suggest a 'gonnegtion', but he only nodded and shook my hand.

'Let us learn to show our friendship for a man when he is alive and not after he is dead,' he suggested. 'After that my own rule is to let everything alone.'

When I left his office the sky had turned dark and I got back to West Egg in a drizzle. After changing my clothes I went next door and found Mr. Gatz walking up and down excitedly in the hall. His pride in his son and in his son's possessions was continually

increasing and now he had something to show me.

'Jimmy sent me this picture.' He took out his wallet with trembling fingers. 'Look there.'

It was a photograph of the house, cracked in the corners and dirty with many hands. He pointed out every detail to me eagerly. 'Look there!' and then sought admiration from my eyes. He had shown it so often that I think it was more real to him now than the house itself.

'Jimmy sent it to me. I think it's a very pretty picture. It shows up well.'

'Very well. Had you seen him lately?'

'He come out to see me two years ago and bought me the house I live in now. Of course we was broke up when he run off from home, but I see now there was a reason for it. He knew he had a big future in front of him. And ever since he made a success he was very generous with me.'

He seemed reluctant to put away the picture, held it for another minute, lingeringly, before my eyes. Then he returned the wallet and pulled from his pocket a ragged old copy of a book called Hopalong Cassidy.

'Look here, this is a book he had when he was a boy. It just shows you.'

He opened it at the back cover and turned it around for me to see. On the last fly-leaf was printed the word SCHEDULE, and the date September 12, 1906. And underneath:

Rise from bed

6.00 A.M.

Dumbbell exercise and wall-scaling

6.15-6.30 "

Study electricity, etc

7.15-8.15 "

Work

8.30-4.30 P.M.

Baseball and sports

4.30-5.00 "

Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it

5.00-6.00 "

Study needed inventions

7.00-9.00 "

GENERAL RESOLVES

No wasting time at Shafers or [a name, indecipherable]

No more smokeing or chewing

Bath every other day

Read one improving book or magazine per week

Save 5.00 [crossed out] 3.00 per week

Be better to parents

'I come across this book by accident,' said the old man. 'It just shows you, don't it?'

'It just shows you.'

'Jimmy was bound to get ahead. He always had some resolves like this or something. Do you notice what he's got about improving his mind? He was always great for that. He told me I et like a hog once, and I beat him for it.'

He was reluctant to close the book, reading each item aloud and then looking eagerly at me. I think he rather expected me to copy down

the list for my own use.

A little before three the Lutheran minister arrived from Flushing, and I began to look involuntarily out the windows for other cars. So did Gatsby's father. And as the time passed and the servants came in and stood waiting in the hall, his eyes began to blink anxiously, and he spoke of the rain in a worried, uncertain way. The minister glanced several times at his watch, so I took him aside and asked him to wait for half an hour. But it wasn't any use. Nobody came.

*

About five o'clock our procession of three cars reached the cemetery and stopped in a thick drizzle beside the gate—first a motor hearse, horribly black and wet, then Mr. Gatz and the minister and I in the limousine, and a little later four or five servants and the postman from West Egg, in Gatsby's station wagon, all wet to the skin. As we started through the gate into the cemetery I heard a car stop and then the sound of someone splashing after us over the soggy ground. I looked around. It was the man with owl-eyed glasses whom I had found marvelling over Gatsby's books in the library one night three months before.

I'd never seen him since then. I don't know how he knew about the funeral, or even his name. The rain poured down his thick

glasses, and he took them off and wiped them to see the protecting canvas unrolled from Gatsby's grave.

I tried to think about Gatsby then for a moment, but he was already too far away, and I could only remember, without resentment, that Daisy hadn't sent a message or a flower. Dimly I heard someone murmur 'Blessed are the dead that the rain falls on,' and then the owl-eyed man said 'Amen to that,' in a brave voice.

We straggled down quickly through the rain to the cars. Owl-eyes spoke to me by the gate.

'I couldn't get to the house,' he remarked.

'Neither could anybody else.'

'Go on!' He started. 'Why, my God! they used to go there by the hundreds.'

He took off his glasses and wiped them again, outside and in.

'The poor son-of-a-bitch,' he said.

*

One of my most vivid memories is of coming back West from prep school and later from college at Christmas time. Those who went farther than Chicago would gather in the old dim Union Station at

six o'clock of a December evening, with a few Chicago friends, already caught up into their own holiday gaieties, to bid them a hasty good-bye. I remember the fur coats of the girls returning from Miss This-or-That's and the chatter of frozen breath and the hands waving overhead as we caught sight of old acquaintances, and the matchings of invitations: 'Are you going to the Ordways'? the Herseys'? the Schultzes?' and the long green tickets clasped tight in our gloved hands. And last the murky yellow cars of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad looking cheerful as Christmas itself on the tracks beside the gate.

When we pulled out into the winter night and the real snow, our snow, began to stretch out beside us and twinkle against the windows, and the dim lights of small Wisconsin stations moved by, a sharp wild brace came suddenly into the air. We drew in deep breaths of it as we walked back from dinner through the cold vestibules, unutterably aware of our identity with this country for one strange hour, before we melted indistinguishably into it again.

That's my Middle West—not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns, but the thrilling returning trains of my youth, and the street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark and the shadows of holly wreaths thrown by lighted windows on the snow. I am part of that, a little solemn with the feel of those long winters, a little complacent from growing up in the Carraway house in a city where

dwelling are still called through decades by a family's name. I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all—Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life.

Even when the East excited me most, even when I was most keenly aware of its superiority to the bored, sprawling, swollen towns beyond the Ohio, with their interminable inquisitions which spared only the children and the very old—even then it had always for me a quality of distortion. West Egg, especially, still figures in my more fantastic dreams. I see it as a night scene by El Greco: a hundred houses, at once conventional and grotesque, crouching under a sullen, overhanging sky and a lustreless moon. In the foreground four solemn men in dress suits are walking along the sidewalk with a stretcher on which lies a drunken woman in a white evening dress. Her hand, which dangles over the side, sparkles cold with jewels. Gravely the men turn in at a house—the wrong house. But no one knows the woman's name, and no one cares.

After Gatsby's death the East was haunted for me like that, distorted beyond my eyes' power of correction. So when the blue smoke of brittle leaves was in the air and the wind blew the wet laundry stiff on the line I decided to come back home.

There was one thing to be done before I left,an awkward,unpleasant thing that perhaps had better have been let alone. But I wanted to leave things in order and not just trust that obliging and indifferent sea to sweep my refuse away. I saw Jordan Baker and talked over and around what had happened to us together,and what had happened afterward to me,and she lay perfectly still,listening,in a big chair.

She was dressed to play golf,and I remember thinking she looked like a good illustration,her chin raised a little jauntily,her hair the color of an autumn leaf,her face the same brown tint as the fingerless glove on her knee. When I had finished she told me without comment that she was engaged to another man. I doubted that,though there were several she could have married at a nod of her head,but I pretended to be surprised. For just a minute I wondered if I wasn't making a mistake,then I thought it all over again quickly and got up to say good-bye.

'Nevertheless you did throw me over,' said Jordan suddenly. 'You threw me over on the telephone. I don't give a damn about you now,but it was a new experience for me,and I felt a little dizzy for a while.'

We shook hands.

'Oh,and do you remember' —she added— 'a conversation we had once

about driving a car?'

'Why—not exactly.'

'You said a bad driver was only safe until she met another bad driver? Well,I met another bad driver,didn't I? I mean it was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were rather an honest,straightforward person. I thought it was your secret pride.'

'I'm thirty,' I said. 'I'm five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor.'

She didn't answer. Angry,and half in love with her,and tremendously sorry,I turned away.

*

One afternoon late in October I saw Tom Buchanan. He was walking ahead of me along Fifth Avenue in his alert,aggressive way,his hands out a little from his body as if to fight off interference,his head moving sharply here and there,adapting itself to his restless eyes. Just as I slowed up to avoid overtaking him he stopped and began frowning into the windows of a jewelry store. Suddenly he saw me and walked back,holding out his hand.

'What's the matter,Nick? Do you object to shaking hands with me?'

'Yes. You know what I think of you.'

'You're crazy,Nick,' he said quickly. 'Crazy as hell. I don't know what's the matter with you.'

'Tom,' I inquired, 'what did you say to Wilson that afternoon?'

He stared at me without a word,and I knew I had guessed right about those missing hours. I started to turn away,but he took a step after me and grabbed my arm.

'I told him the truth,' he said. 'He came to the door while we were getting ready to leave,and when I sent down word that we weren't in he tried to force his way upstairs. He was crazy enough to kill me if I hadn't told him who owned the car. His hand was on a revolver in his pocket every minute he was in the house —' He broke off defiantly. 'What if I did tell him? That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy's,but he was a tough one. He ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car.'

There was nothing I could say,except the one unutterable fact that it wasn't true.

'And if you think I didn't have my share of suffering—look here,when I went to give up that flat and saw that damn box of dog biscuits sitting there on the sideboard,I sat down and cried like a

baby. By God it was awful —'

I couldn't forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made ...

I shook hands with him; it seemed silly not to, for I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child. Then he went into the jewelry store to buy a pearl necklace—or perhaps only a pair of cuff buttons—rid of my provincial squeamishness for ever.

*

Gatsby's house was still empty when I left—the grass on his lawn had grown as long as mine. One of the taxi drivers in the village never took a fare past the entrance gate without stopping for a minute and pointing inside; perhaps it was he who drove Daisy and Gatsby over to East Egg the night of the accident, and perhaps he had made a story about it all his own. I didn't want to hear it and I avoided him when I got off the train.

I spent my Saturday nights in New York because those gleaming, dazzling parties of his were with me so vividly that I

could still hear the music and the laughter,faint and incessant,from his garden,and the cars going up and down his drive. One night I did hear a material car there,and saw its lights stop at his front steps. But I didn't investigate. Probably it was some final guest who had been away at the ends of the earth and didn't know that the party was over.

On the last night,with my trunk packed and my car sold to the grocer,I went over and looked at that huge incoherent failure of a house once more. On the white steps an obscene word,scrawled by some boy with a piece of brick,stood out clearly in the moonlight,and I erased it,drawing my shoe raspily along the stone. Then I wandered down to the beach and sprawled out on the sand.

Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy,moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh,green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees,the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house,had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams;for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent,compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither

understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther ... And one fine morning -

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.