The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and

most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions

whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms

of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at

www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you

will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before

using this eBook.

Title: The Great Gatsby

Author: F. Scott Fitzgerald

Release Date: January 17, 2021 [eBook #64317]

[Most recently updated: January 24 2021]

Language: English

Produced by: Alex Cabal for the Standard Ebooks project, based on a

transcription produced for Project Gutenberg Australia.

\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE GREAT GATSBY \*\*\*

The Great Gatsby

by

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Table of Contents

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

IX

Once again

to

Zelda

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

I

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 judgements, 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 judgements 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 today.

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 centre 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 neighbourhood.

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 neighbour’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

anticlimax. 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 towards the front door for a quarter of a mile,

jumping over sundials 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 motorboat 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-coloured 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-coloured 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-paralysed 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. Tomorrow!” 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 neighbour 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-coloured 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 towards 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

towards 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 tonight.”

“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 neighbour—” 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 everyone, 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 scepticism, 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 lamplight, 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 tomorrow,” 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 weekends 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 rumours, and on the other hand I had no intention

of being rumoured 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 neighbour’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.

II

About halfway 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 nonexistent 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 ash-heaps 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 colour 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 newsstand 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 newsstand she bought a copy of Town Tattle and a

moving-picture magazine, and in the station drugstore 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

weatherproof 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

neighbourhood, 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 whisky 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

whisky 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 everyone 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-coloured 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 kike 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 everyone looked at me accusingly. I

tried to show by my expression that I 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 whisky—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

shirtfront 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 tomorrow. 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 ashtrays 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 halfway 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.

III

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 motorboats

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 coloured 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 colours, 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 centre of a group, and then, excited with triumph,

glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and colour 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 behaviour 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 honour 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 someone

before I should begin to address cordial remarks to the passersby.

“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 tonight, 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 sceptically; “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 bookshelves.

“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 individually 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 favour. 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 roughneck, 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. Vladmir 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 ‘Vladmir 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 someone 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 colour, 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 tonight,” 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 goodbye.

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 tomorrow 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 circles inside. Imagining

that I, too, was hurrying towards 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 semifinal 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.

Everyone 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.

IV

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 timetable the names of

those who came to Gatsby’s house that summer. It is an old timetable

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 Civet, 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 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 Corrigans 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 today 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 colour, bright

with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with

triumphant hatboxes and supper-boxes and toolboxes, and terraced with

a labyrinth of windshields 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 roadhouse 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-coloured

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 flavoured 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 today,” 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 things 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 oceangoing ships, and sped along a cobbled slum lined with

the dark, undeserted saloons of the faded-gilt nineteen-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 favour 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

nonolfactory 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 southeastern Europe, and I was glad that the sight of

Gatsby’s splendid car was included in their sombre 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 gonnegtion.”

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 knobs 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 kerb, 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 to 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

goodbye 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, shortsighted 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, dearies.” She groped around in a wastebasket 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 in 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 splendour.

“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 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

scepticism, 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 façade 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.

V

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 tomorrow 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 tomorrow?”

He considered for a moment. Then, with reluctance: “I want to get the

grass cut,” he said.

We both looked down 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 my—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 lightheaded 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-coloured 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 towards 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 neighbouring 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 an 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 shortcut 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 odour 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-coloured 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 exercise?” 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—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 goodbye 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.

VI

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 upon his past, had increased all

summer until he fell just short of being news. Contemporary legends

such as the “underground pipeline 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 washstand 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 soft-mindedness, 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 in 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,

that 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 pairs 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-coloured,

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 marvellous—”

“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 foxtrot—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 vigour that chafed under the old

euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants

along a shortcut 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 drugstores, a

lot of drugstores. 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 guestrooms 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 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.

VII

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 tomorrow? 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

pocketbook 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 everyone 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 anyone 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, glistening 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 centre 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 rumour 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.”

“Goodbye, 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 anyone 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 whisky,” 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 drugstore. You can buy anything at a

drugstore 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 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 ash-heaps 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 everyone

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 whisky 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 aluminium putter that I use today.”

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. Asa

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 unbelief. 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 whisky, 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 anyone 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’s 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 tomorrow.”

“You can suit yourself about that, old sport,” said Gatsby steadily.

“I found out what your ‘drugstores’ were.” He turned to us and spoke

rapidly. “He and this Wolfshiem bought up a lot of side-street

drugstores 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 drugstore 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

whisky 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 clamour 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

briefcase 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

ash-heaps 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 neighbour 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 tomorrow, 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, colourless 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. Mavro Michaelis wasn’t even sure of

its colour—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 metal

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

deranged 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 worktable by the wall, and Tom, with his back to us, was bending

over it, motionless. Next to him stood a motorcycle 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! Oh, 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’antly 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 halfway 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

grasping 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 colour’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 damned 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 tonight.”

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 tomorrow,” 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 ground

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.

VIII

I couldn’t sleep all night; a foghorn 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 humidor 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 motorcars 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 pretences. 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 flavour 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 today, Mr. Gatsby. Leaves’ll start

falling pretty soon, and then there’s always trouble with the pipes.”

“Don’t do it today,” 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, goodbye.”

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

colour 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 goodbye.

I thanked him for his hospitality. We were always thanking him for

that—I and the others.

“Goodbye,” 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

timetable, 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 ash-heaps 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 ash-heaps, where small grey

clouds took on fantastic shapes 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 to

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—afterwards 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.

IX

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 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 Wolfshiem

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 splendour 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 tomorrow,” 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 tomorrow. In fact, there’s a sort of picnic or something. Of

course I’ll do my 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 first I 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

came 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 said. 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 at Oggsford I knew I could use him good. I got him to join

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 flyleaf was printed the word schedule, and the date September

12, 1906. And underneath:

Rise from bed 6:00 a.m.

Dumbell 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 ”

Practise elocution, poise and how to attain it 5:00-6:00 ”

Study needed inventions 7:00-9:00 ”

General Resolves

\* No wasting time at Shafters 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 came 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 me 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 goodbye. 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 dwellings 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

colour 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 goodbye.

“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 honour.”

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 jewellery 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 jewellery

store to buy a pearl necklace—or perhaps only a pair of cuff

buttons—rid of my provincial squeamishness forever.

------------------------------------------------------------------------

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 raspingly 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 further … And

one fine morning—

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into

the past.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE GREAT GATSBY \*\*\*

Updated editions will replace the previous one--the old editions will

be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright

law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works,

so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the

United States without permission and without paying copyright

royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part

of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project

Gutenberg-tm electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm

concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark,

and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following

the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use

of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for

copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very

easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation

of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project

Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away--you may

do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected

by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark

license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting the free

distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work

(or any other work associated in any way with the phrase "Project

Gutenberg"), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full

Project Gutenberg-tm License available with this file or online at

www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project

Gutenberg-tm electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg-tm

electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to

and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property

(trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all

the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or

destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in your

possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a

Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work and you do not agree to be bound

by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the

person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph

1.E.8.

1.B. "Project Gutenberg" is a registered trademark. It may only be

used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who

agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few

things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works

even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See

paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project

Gutenberg-tm electronic works if you follow the terms of this

agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg-tm

electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation ("the

Foundation" or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection

of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works. Nearly all the individual

works in the collection are in the public domain in the United

States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the

United States and you are located in the United States, we do not

claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing,

displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as

all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope

that you will support the Project Gutenberg-tm mission of promoting

free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg-tm

works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the

Project Gutenberg-tm name associated with the work. You can easily

comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the

same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg-tm License when

you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern

what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are

in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States,

check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this

agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing,

distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any

other Project Gutenberg-tm work. The Foundation makes no

representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any

country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other

immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg-tm License must appear

prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg-tm work (any work

on which the phrase "Project Gutenberg" appears, or with which the

phrase "Project Gutenberg" is associated) is accessed, displayed,

performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and

most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no

restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it

under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this

eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the

United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where

you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is

derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not

contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the

copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in

the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are

redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase "Project

Gutenberg" associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply

either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or

obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg-tm

trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work is posted

with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution

must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any

additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms

will be linked to the Project Gutenberg-tm License for all works

posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the

beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg-tm

License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this

work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg-tm.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this

electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without

prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with

active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project

Gutenberg-tm License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary,

compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including

any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access

to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg-tm work in a format

other than "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other format used in the official

version posted on the official Project Gutenberg-tm web site

(www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense

to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means

of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain

Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the

full Project Gutenberg-tm License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying,

performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg-tm works

unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing

access to or distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works

provided that:

\* You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from

the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method

you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed

to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, but he has

agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project

Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid

within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are

legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty

payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project

Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in

Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg

Literary Archive Foundation."

\* You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies

you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he

does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm

License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all

copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue

all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg-tm

works.

\* You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of

any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the

electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of

receipt of the work.

\* You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free

distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project

Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than

are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing

from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of

the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark. Contact the Foundation as set

forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable

effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread

works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project

Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm

electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may

contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate

or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other

intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or

other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or

cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right

of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project

Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project

Gutenberg-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project

Gutenberg-tm electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all

liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal

fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT

LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE

PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE

TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE

LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR

INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH

DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a

defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can

receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a

written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you

received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium

with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you

with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in

lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person

or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second

opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If

the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing

without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth

in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO

OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT

LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied

warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of

damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement

violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the

agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or

limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or

unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the

remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the

trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone

providing copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in

accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the

production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm

electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses,

including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of

the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this

or any Project Gutenberg-tm work, (b) alteration, modification, or

additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any

Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-tm is synonymous with the free distribution of

electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of

computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It

exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations

from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the

assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg-tm's

goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm collection will

remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project

Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure

and permanent future for Project Gutenberg-tm and future

generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary

Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see

Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at

www.gutenberg.org

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary

Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit

501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the

state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal

Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification

number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary

Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by

U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West,

Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up

to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site

and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg

Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without

widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of

increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be

freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest

array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations

($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt

status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating

charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United

States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a

considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up

with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations

where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND

DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular

state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we

have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition

against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who

approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make

any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from

outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation

methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other

ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To

donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project

Gutenberg-tm concept of a library of electronic works that could be

freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and

distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of

volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks are often created from several printed

editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in

the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not

necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper

edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search

facility: www.gutenberg.org

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg-tm,

including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary

Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to

subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.