THE GREAT GATSBY

F.SCOTT.FITZGERALD

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Chapter 1

**I**n 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 any one,” he told me, “just remember that all the people in this world haven’t had the advantages that you’ve had.”

He didn’t say any more, but we’ve always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I’m inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up

many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not

a few veteran bores. The abnormal mind is quick to detect and

attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person,

and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of

being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of

wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought —

frequently I have feigned sleep, preoccupation, or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon; for the intimate revelations of young men, or at least the terms in which they express them, are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions.

Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope. I

am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as

my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a

sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally

at birth.

And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the

admission that it has a limit. Conduct may be founded on the

hard rock or the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don’t

care what it’s founded on. When I came back from the East last

autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a

sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous

excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only

Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt

from my reaction — Gatsby, who represented everything for

which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken

series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous

about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises

of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines

that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness

had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability

which is dignified under the name of the “creative temperament.”—

it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic

readiness such as I have never found in any other person and

which it is not likely I shall ever find again. No — Gatsby

turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby,

what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily

closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and shortwinded

elations of men.

My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this

Middle Western city for three generations. The Carraways are

something of a clan, and we have a tradition that we’re descended

from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my

line was my grandfather’s brother, who came here in fifty-one,

sent a substitute to the Civil War, and started the wholesale

hardware business that my father carries on to-day.

I never saw this great-uncle, but I’m supposed to look like

him — with special reference to the rather hard-boiled painting

that hangs in father’s office I graduated from New Haven in

1915, just a quarter of a century after my father, and a little

later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known

as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that

I came back restless. Instead of being the warm 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 neighborhood.

And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves

growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had

that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with

the summer.

There was so much to read, for one thing, and so much fine

health to be pulled down out of the young breath-giving air. I

bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment

securities, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new

money from the mint, promising to unfold the shining secrets

that only Midas and Morgan and Maecenas knew. And I had

the high intention of reading many other books besides. I was

rather literary in college — one year I wrote a series of very

solemn and obvious editorials for the “Yale News.”— and now I

was going to bring back all such things into my life and become

again that most limited of all specialists, the “well-rounded

man.” This isn’t just an epigram — life is much more successfully

looked at from a single window, after all.

It was a matter of chance that I should have rented a house

in one of the strangest communities in North America. It was

on that slender riotous island which extends itself due east of

New York — and where there are, among other natural curiosities,

two unusual formations of land. Twenty miles from the

city a pair of enormous eggs, identical in contour and separated only by a courtesy bay, jut out into the most domesticated body of salt water in the Western hemisphere, the great

wet barnyard of Long Island Sound. they are not perfect ovals

— like the egg in the Columbus story, they are both crushed

flat at the contact end — but their physical resemblance must

be a source of perpetual confusion to the gulls that fly overhead.

to the wingless a more arresting 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

Hotel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking

new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming

pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden. it was

Gatsby’s mansion. Or, rather, as I didn’t know Mr. Gatsby, it

was a mansion inhabited by a gentleman of that name. My own

house was an eyesore, but it was a small eyesore, and it had

been overlooked, so I had a view of the water, a partial view of

my neighbor’s lawn, and the consoling proximity of millionaires

— all for eighty dollars a month.

Across the courtesy bay the white palaces of fashionable East

Egg glittered along the water, and the history of the summer

really begins on the evening I drove over there to have dinner

with the Tom Buchanans. Daisy was my second cousin once removed,

and I’d known Tom in college. And just after the war I

spent two days with them in Chicago.

Her husband, among various physical accomplishments, had

been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at

New Haven — a national figure in a way, one of those men who

reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that

everything afterward savors of anti-climax. His family were

enormously wealthy — even in college his freedom with money

was a matter for reproach — but now he’d left Chicago and

come East in a fashion that rather took your breath away: for

instance, he’d brought down a string of polo ponies from Lake

Forest. It was hard to realize that a man in my own generation

was wealthy enough to do that.

Why they came East I don’t know. They had spent a year in

France for no particular reason, and then drifted here and

there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich

together. This was a permanent move, said Daisy over the telephone,

but I didn’t believe it — I had no sight into Daisy’s

heart, but I felt that Tom would drift on forever seeking, a little

wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable

football game.

And so it happened that on a warm windy evening I drove

over to East Egg to see two old friends whom I scarcely knew

at all. Their house was even more elaborate than I expected, a

cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion, overlooking

the bay. The lawn started at the beach and ran toward the

front door for a quarter of a mile, jumping over sun-dials and

brick walks and burning gardens — finally when it reached the

house drifting up the side in bright vines as though from the

momentum of its run. The front was broken by a line of French

windows, glowing now with reflected gold and wide open to

the warm windy afternoon, and Tom Buchanan in riding

clothes was standing with his legs apart on the front porch.

He had changed since his New Haven years. Now he was a

sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and

a supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established

dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of

always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate

swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of

that body — he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he

strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack of

muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It

was a body capable of enormous leverage — a cruel body.

His speaking voice, a gruff husky tenor, added to the impression

of fractiousness he conveyed. There was a touch of paternal

contempt in it, even toward people he liked — and there

were men at New Haven who had hated his guts.

“Now, don’t think my opinion on these matters is final,” he

seemed to say, “just because I’m stronger and more of a man

than you are.” We were in the same senior society, and while

we were never intimate I always had the impression that he approved of me and wanted me to like him with some harsh, defiant wistfulness of his own.

We talked for a few minutes on the sunny porch.

“I’ve got a nice place here,” he said, his eyes flashing about

restlessly.

Turning me around by one arm, he moved a broad flat hand

along the front vista, including in its sweep a sunken Italian

garden, a half acre of deep, pungent roses, and a snub-nosed

motor-boat that bumped the tide offshore.

“It belonged to Demaine, the oil man.” He turned me around

again, politely and abruptly. “We’ll go inside.”

We walked through a high hallway into a bright rosy-colored

space, fragilely bound into the house by French windows at

either end. The windows were ajar and gleaming white against

the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into

the house. A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at

one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward

the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling, and then rippled

over the wine-colored rug, making a shadow on it as wind does

on the sea.

The only completely stationary object in the room was an

enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up

as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white,

and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had

just been blown back in after a short flight around the house. I

must have stood for a few moments listening to the whip and

snap of the curtains and the groan of a picture on the wall.

Then there was a boom as Tom Buchanan shut the rear windows

and the caught wind died out about the room, and the

curtains and the rugs and the two young women ballooned

slowly to the floor.

The younger of the two was a stranger to me. She was extended

full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless,

and with her chin raised a little, as if she were balancing

something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out

of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of it — indeed, I was

almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed

her by coming in.

The other girl, Daisy, made an attempt to rise — she leaned

slightly forward with a conscientious expression — then she laughed, an absurd, charming little laugh, and I laughed too and came forward into the room.

“I’m p-paralyzed with happiness.” She laughed again, as if

she said something very witty, and held my hand for a moment,

looking up into my face, promising that there was no one in the

world she so much wanted to see. That was a way she had. She

hinted in a murmur that the surname of the balancing girl was

Baker. (I’ve heard it said that Daisy’s murmur was only to

make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made

it no less charming.)

At any rate, Miss Baker’s lips fluttered, she nodded at me almost

imperceptibly, and then quickly tipped her head back

again — the object she was balancing had obviously tottered a

little and given her something of a fright. Again a sort of apology

arose to my lips. Almost any exhibition of complete selfsufficiency

draws a stunned tribute from me.

I looked back at my cousin, who began to ask me questions in

her low, thrilling voice. It was the kind of voice that the ear follows

up and down, as if each speech is an arrangement of

notes that will never be played again. Her face was sad and

lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate

mouth, but there was an excitement in her voice that men

who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion,

a whispered “Listen,” a promise that she had done

gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay,

exciting things hovering in the next hour.

I told her how I had stopped off in Chicago for a day on my

way East, and how a dozen people had sent their love through

me.

“Do they miss me?” she cried ecstatically.

“The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear

wheel painted black as a mourning wreath, and there’s a persistent

wail all night along the north shore.”

“How gorgeous! Let’s go back, Tom. To-morrow!” Then she

added irrelevantly: “You ought to see the baby.”

“I’d like to.”

“She’s asleep. She’s three years old. Haven’t you ever seen

her?”

“Never.”

“Well, you ought to see her. She’s ——”

Tom Buchanan, who had been hovering restlessly about the

room, stopped and rested his hand on my shoulder.

“What you doing, Nick?”

“I’m a bond man.”

“Who with?”

I told him.

“Never heard of them,” he remarked decisively.

This annoyed me.

“You will,” I answered shortly. “You will if you stay in the

East.”

“Oh, I’ll stay in the East, don’t you worry,” he said, glancing

at Daisy and then back at me, as if he were alert for something

more. “I’d be a God damned fool to live anywhere else.”

At this point Miss Baker said: “Absolutely!” with such suddenness

that I started — it was the first word she 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, smallbreasted

girl, with an erect carriage, which she accentuated by

throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet.

Her gray sun-strained eyes looked back at me with polite

reciprocal curiosity out of a wan, charming, discontented face.

It occurred to me now that I had seen her, or a picture of her,

somewhere before.

“You live in West Egg,” she remarked contemptuously. “I

know somebody there.”

“I don’t know a single ——”

“You must know Gatsby.”

“Gatsby?” demanded Daisy. “What Gatsby?”

Before I could reply that he was my neighbor dinner was announced;

wedging his tense arm imperatively under mine, Tom

Buchanan compelled me from the room as though he were

moving a checker to another square.

Slenderly, languidly, their hands set lightly on their hips, the

two young women preceded us out onto a rosy-colored porch,

open toward the sunset, where four candles flickered on the

table in the diminished wind.

“Why CANDLES?” objected Daisy, frowning. She snapped

them out with her fingers. “In two weeks it’ll be the longest

day in the year.” She looked at us all radiantly. “Do you always

watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it? I always

watch for the longest day in the year and then miss it.”

“We ought to plan something,” yawned Miss Baker, sitting

down at the table as if she were getting into bed.

“All right,” said Daisy. “What’ll we plan?” She turned to me

helplessly: “What do people plan?”

Before I could answer her eyes fastened with an awed expression

on her little finger.

“Look!” she complained; “I hurt it.”

We all looked — the knuckle was black and blue.

“You did it, Tom,” she said accusingly. “I know you didn’t

mean to, but you DID do it. That’s what I get for marrying a

brute of a man, a great, big, hulking physical specimen of a

——”

“I hate that word hulking,” objected Tom crossly, “even in

kidding.”

“Hulking,” insisted Daisy.

Sometimes she and Miss Baker talked at once, unobtrusively

and with a bantering inconsequence that was never quite chatter,

that was as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal

eyes in the absence of all desire. They were here, and they

accepted Tom and me, making only a polite pleasant effort to

entertain or to be entertained. They knew that presently dinner

would be over and a little later the evening too would be over

and casually put away. It was sharply different from the West,

where an evening was hurried from phase to phase toward its

close, in a continually disappointed anticipation or else in

sheer nervous dread of the moment itself.

“You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy,” I confessed on my

second glass of corky but rather impressive claret. “Can’t you

talk about crops or something?”

I meant nothing in particular by this remark, but it was taken

up in an unexpected way.

“Civilization’s going to pieces,” broke out Tom violently. “I’ve

gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read

‘The Rise of the Colored Empires’ by this man Goddard?”

“Why, no,” I answered, rather surprised by his tone.

“Well, it’s a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The

idea is if we don’t look out the white race will be — will be utterly

submerged. It’s all scientific stuff; it’s been proved.”

“Tom’s getting very profound,” said Daisy, with an expression

of unthoughtful sadness. “He reads deep books with long

words in them. What was that word we ——”

“Well, these books are all scientific,” insisted Tom, glancing

at her impatiently. “This fellow has worked out the whole

thing. It’s up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or

these other races will have control of things.”

“We’ve got to beat them down,” whispered Daisy, winking ferociously

toward the fervent sun.

“You ought to live in California —” began Miss Baker, but

Tom interrupted her by shifting heavily in his chair.

“This idea is that we’re Nordics. I am, and you are, and you

are, and ——” After an infinitesimal hesitation he included

Daisy with a slight nod, and she winked at me again. “— And

we’ve produced all the things that go to make civilization — oh,

science and art, and all that. Do you see?”

There was something pathetic in his concentration, as if his

complacency, more acute than of old, was not enough to him

any more. When, almost immediately, the telephone rang inside

and the butler left the porch Daisy seized upon the momentary

interruption and leaned toward me.

“I’ll tell you a family secret,” she whispered enthusiastically.

“It’s about the butler’s nose. Do you want to hear about the

butler’s nose?”

“That’s why I came over to-night.”

“Well, he wasn’t always a butler; he used to be the silver polisher

for some people in New York that had a silver service for two hundred people. He had to polish it from morning till night, until finally it began to affect his nose —"

“Things went from bad to worse,” suggested Miss Baker.

“Yes. Things went from bad to worse, until finally he had to

give up his position.”

For a moment the last sunshine fell with romantic affection

upon her glowing face; her voice compelled me forward

breathlessly as I listened — then the glow faded, each light

deserting her with lingering regret, like children leaving a

pleasant street at dusk.

The butler came back and murmured something close to

Tom’s ear, whereupon Tom frowned, pushed back his chair,

and without a word went inside. As if his absence quickened

something within her, Daisy leaned forward again, her voice

glowing and singing.

“I love to see you at my table, Nick. You remind me of a — of

a rose, an absolute rose. Doesn’t he?” She turned to Miss

Baker for confirmation: “An absolute rose?”

This was untrue. I am not even faintly like a rose. She was

only extemporizing, but a stirring warmth flowed from her, as

if her heart was trying to come out to you concealed in one of

those breathless, thrilling words. Then suddenly she threw her

napkin on the table and excused herself and went into the

house.

Miss Baker and I exchanged a short glance consciously

devoid of meaning. I was about to speak when she sat up

alertly and said “Sh!” in a warning voice. A subdued impassioned

murmur was audible in the room beyond, and Miss

Baker leaned forward unashamed, trying to hear. The murmur

trembled on the verge of coherence, sank down, mounted excitedly,

and then ceased altogether.

“This Mr. Gatsby you spoke of is my neighbor ——” I said.

“Don’t talk. I want to hear what happens.”

“Is something happening?” I inquired innocently.

“You mean to say you don’t know?” said Miss Baker, honestly

surprised. “I thought everybody knew.”

“I don’t.”

“Why ——” she said hesitantly, “Tom’s got some woman in

New York.”

“Got some woman?” I repeated blankly.

Miss Baker nodded.

“She might have the decency not to telephone him at dinner

time. Don’t you think?”

Almost before I had grasped her meaning there was the flutter

of a dress and the crunch of leather boots, and Tom and

Daisy were back at the table.

“It couldn’t be helped!” cried Daisy with tense gaiety.

She sat down, glanced searchingly at Miss Baker and then at

me, and continued: “I looked outdoors for a minute, and it’s

very romantic outdoors. There’s a bird on the lawn that I think

must be a nightingale come over on the Cunard or White Star

Line. He’s singing away ——” Her voice sang: “It’s romantic,

isn’t it, Tom?”

“Very romantic,” he said, and then miserably to me: “If it’s

light enough after dinner, I want to take you down to the

stables.”

The telephone rang inside, startlingly, and as Daisy shook

her head decisively at Tom the subject of the stables, in fact all

subjects, vanished into air. Among the broken fragments of the

last five minutes at table I remember the candles being lit

again, pointlessly, and I was conscious of wanting to look

squarely at every one, and yet to avoid all eyes. I couldn’t

guess what Daisy and Tom were thinking, but I doubt if even

Miss Baker, who seemed to have mastered a certain hardy

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 lamp-light, bright on his boots and dull on the autumn-leaf yellow of her hair, glinted along the paper as she turned a page with a flutter of slender muscles in her arms.

When we came in she held us silent for a moment with a lifted

hand.

“To be continued,” she said, tossing the magazine on the

table, “in our very next issue.”

Her body asserted itself with a restless movement of her

knee, and she stood up.

“Ten o’clock,” she remarked, apparently finding the time on

the ceiling. “Time for this good girl to go to bed.”

“Jordan’s going to play in the tournament to-morrow,” explained

Daisy, “over at Westchester.”

“Oh — you’re Jordan BAKER.”

I knew now why her face was familiar — its pleasing contemptuous

expression had looked out at me from many rotogravure

pictures of the sporting life at Asheville and Hot

Springs and Palm Beach. I had heard some story of her too, a

critical, unpleasant story, but what it was I had forgotten long

ago.

“Good night,” she said softly. “Wake me at eight, won’t you.”

“If you’ll get up.”

“I will. Good night, Mr. Carraway. See you anon.”

“Of course you will,” confirmed Daisy. “In fact I think I’ll arrange

a marriage. Come over often, Nick, and I’ll sort of — oh

— fling you together. You know — lock you up accidentally in

linen closets and push you out to sea in a boat, and all that sort

of thing ——”

“Good night,” called Miss Baker from the stairs. “I haven’t

heard a word.”

“She’s a nice girl,” said Tom after a moment. “They oughtn’t

to let her run around the country this way.”

“Who oughtn’t to?” inquired Daisy coldly.

“Her family.”

“Her family is one aunt about a thousand years old. Besides,

Nick’s going to look after her, aren’t you, Nick? She’s going to

spend lots of week-ends out here this summer. I think the

home influence will be very good for her.”

Daisy and Tom looked at each other for a moment in silence.

“Is she from New York?” I asked quickly.

“From Louisville. Our white girlhood was passed together

there. Our beautiful white ——”

“Did you give Nick a little heart to heart talk on the veranda?”

demanded Tom suddenly.

“Did I?” She looked at me.

“I can’t seem to remember, but I think we talked about the

Nordic race. Yes, I’m sure we did. It sort of crept up on us and

first thing you know ——”

“Don’t believe everything you hear, Nick,” he advised me.

I said lightly that I had heard nothing at all, and a few

minutes later I got up to go home. They came to the door with

me and stood side by side in a cheerful square of light. As I

started my motor Daisy peremptorily called: “Wait!”

“I forgot to ask you something, and it’s important. We heard

you were engaged to a girl out West.”

“That’s right,” corroborated Tom kindly. “We heard that you

were engaged.”

“It’s libel. I’m too poor.”

“But we heard it,” insisted Daisy, surprising me by opening

up again in a flower-like way. “We heard it from three people,

so it must be true.”

Of course I knew what they were referring to, but I wasn’t

even vaguely engaged. The fact that gossip had published the

banns was one of the reasons I had come East. You can’t stop

going with an old friend on account of rumors, and on the other

hand I had no intention of being rumored into marriage.

Their interest rather touched me and made them less remotely

rich — nevertheless, I was confused and a little disgusted

as I drove away. It seemed to me that the thing for Daisy to

do was to rush out of the house, child in arms — but apparently

there were no such intentions in her head. As for Tom, the fact

that he “had some woman in New York.” was really less surprising

than that he had been depressed by a book. Something

was making him nibble at the edge of stale ideas as if his

sturdy physical egotism no longer nourished his peremptory

heart.

Already it was deep summer on roadhouse roofs and in front

of wayside garages, where new red gas-pumps sat out in pools

of light, and when I reached my estate at West Egg I ran the car under its shed and sat for a while on an abandoned grass roller in the yard. The wind had blown off, leaving a loud, bright night, with wings beating in the trees and a persistent

organ sound as the full bellows of the earth blew the frogs full

of life. The silhouette of a moving cat wavered across the

moonlight, and turning my head to watch it, I saw that I was

not alone — fifty feet away a figure had emerged from the

shadow of my neighbor’s mansion and was standing with his

hands in his pockets regarding the silver pepper of the stars.

Something in his leisurely movements and the secure position

of his feet upon the lawn suggested that it was Mr. Gatsby himself,

come out to determine what share was his of our local

heavens.

I decided to call to him. Miss Baker had mentioned him at

dinner, and that would do for an introduction. But I didn’t call

to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to

be alone — he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in

a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn

he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward — and distinguished

nothing except a single green light, minute and far

away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked

once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again

in the unquiet darkness.

Chapter 2

**A**bout half way between West Egg and New York the motor

road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a

quarter of a mile, so as to shrink away from a certain desolate

area of land. This is a valley of ashes — a fantastic farm where

ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens;

where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and

rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men

who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery

air. Occasionally a line of gray cars crawls along an invisible

track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately

the ash-gray men swarm up with leaden spades and stir

up an impenetrable cloud, which screens their obscure operations

from your sight. But above the gray 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 irises 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 restaurants with her and, leaving her at a table, sauntered about, chatting with whomsoever he knew. Though I was curious to see her, I had no desire to meet her — but I did.

I went up to New York with Tom on the train one afternoon,

and when we stopped by the ashheaps he jumped to his feet

and, taking hold of my elbow, literally forced me from the car.

“We’re getting off,” he insisted. “I want you to meet my girl.”

I think he’d tanked up a good deal at luncheon, and his determination

to have my company bordered on violence. The supercilious

assumption was that on Sunday afternoon I had

nothing better to do.

I followed him over a low whitewashed railroad fence, and

we walked back a hundred yards along the road under Doctor

Eckleburg’s persistent stare. The only building in sight was a

small block of yellow brick sitting on the edge of the waste

land, a sort of compact Main Street ministering to it, and contiguous

to absolutely nothing. One of the three shops it contained

was for rent and another was an all-night restaurant,

approached by a trail of ashes; the third was a garage — Repairs.

GEORGE B. WILSON. Cars bought and sold.— and I followed

Tom inside.

The interior was unprosperous and bare; the only car visible

was the dust-covered wreck of a Ford which crouched in a dim

corner. It had occurred to me that this shadow of a garage

must be a blind, and that sumptuous and romantic apartments

were concealed overhead, when the proprietor himself appeared

in the door of an office, wiping his hands on a piece of

waste. He was a blond, spiritless man, anaemic, and faintly

handsome. When he saw us a damp gleam of hope sprang into

his light blue eyes.

“Hello, Wilson, old man,” said Tom, slapping him jovially on

the shoulder. “How’s business?”

“I can’t complain,” answered Wilson unconvincingly. “When

are you going to sell me that car?”

“Next week; I’ve got my man working on it now.”

“Works pretty slow, don’t he?”

“No, he doesn’t,” said Tom coldly. “And if you feel that way

about it, maybe I’d better sell it somewhere else after all.”

“I don’t mean that,” explained Wilson quickly. “I just meant

——”

His voice faded off and Tom glanced impatiently around the

garage. Then I heard footsteps on a stairs, and in a moment

the thickish figure of a woman blocked out the light from the

office door. She was in the middle thirties, and faintly stout,

but she carried her surplus flesh sensuously as some women

can. Her face, above a spotted dress of dark blue crepe-dechine,

contained no facet or gleam of beauty, but there was an

immediately perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of

her body were continually smouldering. She smiled slowly and,

walking through her husband as if he were a ghost, shook

hands with Tom, looking him flush in the eye. Then she wet her

lips, and without turning around spoke to her husband in a

soft, coarse voice:

“Get some chairs, why don’t you, so somebody can sit down.”

“Oh, sure,” agreed Wilson hurriedly, and went toward the

little office, mingling immediately with the cement color of the

walls. A white ashen dust veiled his dark suit and his pale hair

as it veiled everything in the vicinity — except his wife, who

moved close to Tom.

“I want to see you,” said Tom intently. “Get on the next

train.”

“All right.”

“I’ll meet you by the news-stand on the lower level.” She nodded

and moved away from him just as George Wilson emerged

with two chairs from his office door.

We waited for her down the road and out of sight. It was a

few days before the Fourth of July, and a gray, scrawny Italian

child was setting torpedoes in a row along the railroad track.

“Terrible place, isn’t it,” said Tom, exchanging a frown with

Doctor Eckleburg.

“Awful.”

“It does her good to get away.”

“Doesn’t her husband object?”

“Wilson? He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York.

He’s so dumb he doesn’t know he’s alive.”

So Tom Buchanan and his girl and I went up together to New

York — or not quite together, for Mrs. Wilson sat discreetly in

another car. Tom deferred that much to the sensibilities of

those East Eggers who might be on the train.

She had changed her dress to a brown figured muslin, which

stretched tight over her rather wide hips as Tom helped her to

the platform in New York. At the news-stand she bought a copy

of TOWN TATTLE. and a moving-picture magazine, and in the

station drug-store some cold cream and a small flask of

perfume. Up-stairs, in the solemn echoing drive she let four

taxicabs drive away before she selected a new one, lavendercolored

with gray 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 gray 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 wash-rag of a back. “Look at that coat.

Some coat. That’s a dog that’ll never bother you with catching

cold.”

“I think it’s cute,” said Mrs. Wilson enthusiastically. “How

much is it?”

“That dog?” He looked at it admiringly. “That dog will cost

you ten dollars.”

The Airedale — undoubtedly there was an Airedale concerned

in it somewhere, though its feet were startlingly white

— changed hands and settled down into Mrs. Wilson’s lap,

where she fondled the weather-proof coat with rapture.

“Is it a boy or a girl?” she asked delicately.

“That dog? That dog’s a boy.”

“It’s a bitch,” said Tom decisively. “Here’s your money. Go

and buy ten more dogs with it.”

We drove over to Fifth Avenue, so warm and soft, almost pastoral,

on the summer Sunday afternoon that I wouldn’t have

been surprised to see a great flock of white sheep turn the

corner.

“Hold on,” I said, “I have to leave you here.”

“No, you don’t,” interposed Tom quickly.

“Myrtle’ll be hurt if you don’t come up to the apartment.

Won’t you, Myrtle?”

“Come on,” she urged. “I’ll telephone my sister Catherine.

She’s said to be very beautiful by people who ought to know.”

“Well, I’d like to, but ——”

We went on, cutting back again over the Park toward the

West Hundreds. At 158th Street the cab stopped at one slice in

a long white cake of apartment-houses. Throwing a regal

homecoming glance around the neighborhood, Mrs. Wilson

gathered up her dog and her other purchases, and went

haughtily in.

“I’m going to have the McKees come up,” she announced as

we rose in the elevator. “And, of course, I got to call up my sister,

too.”

The apartment was on the top floor — a small living-room, a

small dining-room, a small bedroom, and a bath. The livingroom

was crowded to the doors with a set of tapestried furniture

entirely too large for it, so that to move about was to

stumble continually over scenes of ladies swinging in the gardens

of Versailles. The only picture was an over-enlarged photograph,

apparently a hen sitting on a blurred rock. Looked at

from a distance, however, the hen resolved itself into a bonnet,

and the countenance of a stout old lady beamed down into the

room. Several old copies of TOWN TATTLE. lay on the table together

with a copy of SIMON CALLED PETER, and some of the

small scandal magazines of Broadway. Mrs. Wilson was first

concerned with the dog. A reluctant elevator-boy went for a

box full of straw and some milk, to which he added on his own

initiative a tin of large, hard dog-biscuits — one of which decomposed

apathetically in the saucer of milk all afternoon.

Meanwhile Tom brought out a bottle of whiskey from a locked

bureau door.

I have been drunk just twice in my life, and the second time

was that afternoon; so everything that happened has a dim,

hazy cast over it, although until after eight o’clock the apartment

was full of cheerful sun. Sitting on Tom’s lap Mrs. Wilson

called up several people on the telephone; then there were no

cigarettes, and I went out to buy some at the drugstore on the

corner. When I came back they had disappeared, so I sat down

discreetly in the living-room and read a chapter of SIMON

CALLED PETER.— either it was terrible stuff or the whiskey

distorted things, because it didn’t make any sense to me.

Just as Tom and Myrtle (after the first drink Mrs. Wilson and

I called each other by our first names) reappeared, company

commenced to arrive at the apartment-door.

The sister, Catherine, was a slender, worldly girl of about

thirty, with a solid, sticky bob of red hair, and a complexion

powdered milky white. Her eye-brows had been plucked and

then drawn on again at a more rakish angle, but the efforts of

nature toward the restoration of the old alignment gave a

blurred air to her face. When she moved about there was an incessant

clicking as innumerable pottery bracelets jingled up

and down upon her arms. She came in with such a proprietary

haste, and looked around so possessively at the furniture that I

wondered if she lived here. But when I asked her she laughed

immoderately, repeated my question aloud, and told me she

lived with a girl friend at a hotel.

Mr. McKee was a pale, feminine man from the flat below. He

had just shaved, for there was a white spot of lather on his

cheekbone, and he was most respectful in his greeting to every

one in the room. He informed me that he was in the “artistic

game,” and I gathered later that he was a photographer and

had made the dim enlargement of Mrs. Wilson’s mother which

hovered like an ectoplasm on the wall. His wife was shrill, languid,

handsome, and horrible. She told me with pride that her

husband had photographed her a hundred and twenty-seven

times since they had been married.

Mrs. Wilson had changed her costume some time before, and

was now attired in an elaborate afternoon dress of creamcolored

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 down-stairs.”

“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 neighbor 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 gypped out of it all in two days in the

private rooms. We had an awful time getting back, I can tell

you. God, how I hated that town!”

The late afternoon sky bloomed in the window for a moment

like the blue honey of the Mediterranean — then the shrill

voice of Mrs. McKee called me back into the room.

“I almost made a mistake, too,” she declared vigorously. “I

almost married a little kyke who’d been after me for years. I

knew he was below me. Everybody kept saying to me: ‘Lucille,

that man’s ‘way below you!’ But if I hadn’t met Chester, he’d of

got me sure.”

“Yes, but listen,” said Myrtle Wilson, nodding her head up

and down, “at least you didn’t marry him.”

“I know I didn’t.”

“Well, I married him,” said Myrtle, ambiguously. “And that’s

the difference between your case and mine.”

“Why did you, Myrtle?” demanded Catherine. “Nobody

forced you to.”

Myrtle considered.

“I married him because I thought he was a gentleman,” she

said finally. “I thought he knew something about breeding, but

he wasn’t fit to lick my shoe.”

“You were crazy about him for a while,” said Catherine.

“Crazy about him!” cried Myrtle incredulously. “Who said I

was crazy about him? I never was any more crazy about him

than I was about that man there.”

She pointed suddenly at me, and every one looked at me accusingly.

I tried to show by my expression that I had played no

part in her past.

“The only CRAZY I was was when I married him. I knew right

away I made a mistake. He borrowed somebody’s best suit to

get married in, and never even told me about it, and the man

came after it one day when he was out. ‘oh, is that your suit?’ I

said. ‘this is the first I ever heard about it.’ But I gave it to him

and then I lay down and cried to beat the band all afternoon.”

“She really ought to get away from him,” resumed Catherine

to me. “They’ve been living over that garage for eleven years.

And tom’s the first sweetie she ever had.”

The bottle of whiskey — a second one — was now in constant

demand by all present, excepting Catherine, who “felt just as

good on nothing at all.” Tom rang for the janitor and sent him

for some celebrated sandwiches, which were a complete supper

in themselves. I wanted to get out and walk southward 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 was him too, looking up and wondering. I was

within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by

the inexhaustible variety of life.

Myrtle pulled her chair close to mine, and suddenly her

warm breath poured over me the story of her first meeting

with Tom.

“It was on the two little seats facing each other that are always

the last ones left on the train. I was going up to New York

to see my sister and spend the night. He had on a dress suit

and patent leather shoes, and I couldn’t keep my eyes off him,

but every time he looked at me I had to pretend to be looking

at the advertisement over his head. When we came into the

station he was next to me, and his white shirt-front pressed

against my arm, and so I told him I’d have to call a policeman,

but he knew I lied. I was so excited that when I got into a taxi

with him I didn’t hardly know I wasn’t getting into a subway

train. All I kept thinking about, over and over, was ‘You can’t

live forever; you can’t live forever.’”

She turned to Mrs. McKee and the room rang full of her artificial

laughter.

“My dear,” she cried, “I’m going to give you this dress as

soon as I’m through with it. I’ve got to get another one to-morrow.

I’m going to make a list of all the things I’ve got to get. A

massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those

cute little ash-trays where you touch a spring, and a wreath

with a black silk bow for mother’s grave that’ll last all summer.

I got to write down a list so I won’t forget all the things I got to

do.”

It was nine o’clock — almost immediately afterward I looked

at my watch and found it was ten. Mr. McKee was asleep on a

chair with his fists clenched in his lap, like a photograph of a

man of action. Taking out my handkerchief I wiped from his

cheek the remains of 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 bath-room floor, and

women’s voices scolding, and high over the confusion a long

broken wail of pain. Mr. McKee awoke from his doze and started

in a daze toward the door. When he had gone half way he

turned around and stared at the scene — his wife and Catherine

scolding and consoling as they stumbled here and there

among the crowded furniture with articles of aid, and the despairing

figure on the couch, bleeding fluently, and trying to

spread a copy of TOWN TATTLE. over the tapestry scenes of

Versailles. Then Mr. McKee turned and continued on out the

door. Taking my hat from the chandelier, I followed.

“Come to lunch some day,” he suggested, as we groaned

down in the elevator.

“Where?”

“Anywhere.”

“Keep your hands off the lever,” snapped the elevator boy.

“I beg your pardon,” said Mr. McKee with dignity, “I didn’t

know I was touching it.”

“All right,” I agreed, “I’ll be glad to.”

… I was standing beside his bed and he was sitting up

between the sheets, clad in his underwear, with a great portfolio

in his hands.

“Beauty and the Beast … Loneliness … Old Grocery Horse …

Brook’n Bridge … .”

Then I was lying half asleep in the cold lower level of the

Pennsylvania Station, staring at the morning TRIBUNE, and

waiting for the four o’clock train.

Chapter 3

**T**here was music from my neighbor’s house through the

summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came

and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne

and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his

guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on

the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters

of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam.

On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing

parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and

long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a

brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants,

including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops

and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing

the ravages of the night before.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from

a fruiterer in New York — every Monday these same oranges

and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves.

There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the

juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button

was pressed two hundred times by a butler’s thumb.

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with

several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to

make a Christmas tree of Gatsby’s enormous garden. On buffet

tables, garnished with glistening hors-d’oeuvre, spiced baked

hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry

pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a

bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and

liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female

guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o’clock the orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece

affair, but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones

and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing up-stairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors, and hair shorn 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 color

under the constantly changing light.

Suddenly one of the gypsies, in trembling opal, seizes a cocktail

out of the air, dumps it down for courage and, moving her

hands like Frisco, dances out alone on the canvas platform. A

momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly

for her, and there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous

news goes around that she is Gilda Gray’s understudy from the

FOLLIES. The party has begun.

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby’s house I

was one of the few guests who had actually been invited.

People were not invited — they went there. They got into automobiles

which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow

they ended up at Gatsby’s door. Once there they were introduced

by somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that they conducted

themselves according to the rules of behavior associated

with amusement parks. Sometimes they came and went

without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a

simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission.

I had been actually invited. A chauffeur in a uniform of

robin’s-egg blue crossed my lawn early that Saturday morning with a surprisingly formal note from his employer: the honor would be entirely Gatsby’s, it said, if I would attend his “little party.” that night.

He had seen me several times, and had intended

to call on me long before, but a peculiar combination of

circumstances had prevented it — signed Jay Gatsby, in a

majestic hand.

Dressed up in white flannels I went over to his lawn a little

after seven, and wandered around rather ill at ease among

swirls and eddies of people I didn’t know — though here and

there was a face I had noticed on the commuting train. I was

immediately struck by the number of young Englishmen dotted

about; all well dressed, all looking a little hungry, and all talking

in low, earnest voices to solid and prosperous Americans. I

was sure that they were selling something: bonds or insurance

or automobiles. They were at least agonizingly aware of the

easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for

a few words in the right key.

As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host, but

the two or three people of whom I asked his whereabouts

stared at me in such an amazed way, and denied so vehemently

any knowledge of his movements, that I slunk off in the direction

of the cocktail table — the only place in the garden where

a single man could linger without looking purposeless and

alone.

I was on my way to get roaring drunk from sheer embarrassment

when Jordan Baker came out of the house and stood at

the head of the marble steps, leaning a little backward and

looking with contemptuous interest down into the garden.

Welcome or not, I found it necessary to attach myself to

some one before I should begin to address cordial remarks to

the passers-by.

“Hello!” I roared, advancing toward her. My voice seemed

unnaturally loud across the garden.

“I thought you might be here,” she responded absently as I

came up. “I remembered you lived next door to ——” She held

my hand impersonally, as a promise that she’d take care of me

in a minute, and gave ear to two girls in twin yellow dresses,

who stopped at the foot of the steps.

“Hello!” they cried together. “Sorry you didn’t win.”

That was for the golf tournament. She had lost in the finals

the week before.

“You don’t know who we are,” said one of the girls in yellow,

“but we met you here about a month ago.”

“You’ve dyed your hair since then,” remarked Jordan, and I

started, but the girls had moved casually on and her remark

was addressed to the premature moon, produced like the supper,

no doubt, out of a caterer’s basket. With Jordan’s slender

golden arm resting in mine, we descended the steps and

sauntered about the garden. A tray of cocktails floated at us

through the twilight, and we sat down at a table with the two

girls in yellow and three men, each one introduced to us as Mr.

Mumble.

“Do you come to these parties often?” inquired Jordan of the

girl beside her.

“The last one was the one I met you at,” answered the girl, in

an alert confident voice. She turned to her companion: “Wasn’t

it for you, Lucille?”

It was for Lucille, too.

“I like to come,” Lucille said. “I never care what I do, so I always

have a good time. When I was here last I tore my gown

on a chair, and he asked me my name and address — inside of

a week I got a package from Croirier’s with a new evening

gown in it.”

“Did you keep it?” asked Jordan.

“Sure I did. I was going to wear it to-night, but it was too big

in the bust and had to be altered. It was gas blue with lavender

beads. Two hundred and sixty-five dollars.”

“There’s something funny about a fellow that’ll do a thing

like that,” said the other girl eagerly. “He doesn’t want any

trouble with ANYbody.”

“Who doesn’t?” I inquired.

“Gatsby. Somebody told me ——”

The two girls and Jordan leaned together confidentially.

“Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once.”

A thrill passed over all of us. The three Mr. Mumbles bent

forward and listened eagerly.

“I don’t think it’s so much THAT,” argued Lucille 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 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 country-side — East Egg

condescending to West Egg, and carefully on guard against its

spectroscopic gayety.

“Let’s get out,” whispered Jordan, after a somehow wasteful

and inappropriate half-hour. “This is much too polite for me.”

We got up, and she explained that we were going to find the

host: I had never met him, she said, and it was making me uneasy.

The undergraduate nodded in a cynical, melancholy way.

The bar, where we glanced first, was crowded, but Gatsby

was not there. She couldn’t find him from the top of the steps,

and he wasn’t on the veranda. On a chance we tried an

important-looking door, and walked into a high Gothic library,

panelled with carved English oak, and probably transported

complete from some ruin overseas.

A stout, middle-aged man, with enormous owl-eyed spectacles,

was sitting somewhat drunk on the edge of a great

table, staring with unsteady concentration at the shelves of

books. As we entered he wheeled excitedly around and examined

Jordan from head to foot.

“What do you think?” he demanded impetuously.

“About what?” He waved his hand toward the book-shelves.

“About that. As a matter of fact you needn’t bother to ascertain.

I ascertained. They’re real.”

“The books?”

He nodded.

“Absolutely real — have pages and everything. I thought

they’d be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they’re absolutely

real. Pages and — Here! Lemme show you.”

Taking our scepticism for granted, he rushed to the bookcases

and returned with Volume One of the “Stoddard

Lectures.”

“See!” he cried triumphantly. “It’s a bona-fide piece of printed

matter. It fooled me. This fella’s a regular Belasco. It’s a

triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to

stop, too — didn’t cut the pages. But what do you want? What

do you expect?”

He snatched the book from me and replaced it hastily on its

shelf, muttering that if one brick was removed the whole library

was liable to collapse.

“Who brought you?” he demanded. “Or did you just come? I

was brought. Most people were brought.”

Jordan looked at him alertly, cheerfully, without answering.

“I was brought by a woman named Roosevelt,” he continued.

“Mrs. Claud Roosevelt. Do you know her? I met her somewhere

last night. I’ve been drunk for about a week now, and I thought

it might sober me up to sit in a library.”

“Has it?”

“A little bit, I think. I can’t tell yet. I’ve only been here an

hour. Did I tell you about the books? They’re real. They’re ——”

“You told us.” We shook hands with him gravely and went

back outdoors.

There was dancing now on the canvas in the garden; old men

pushing young girls backward in eternal graceless circles, superior

couples holding each other tortuously, fashionably, and

keeping in the corners — and a great number of single girls

dancing individualistically or relieving the orchestra for a moment

of the burden of the banjo or the traps. By midnight the

hilarity had increased. A celebrated tenor had sung in Italian,

and a notorious contralto had sung in jazz, and between the numbers people were doing “stunts.” all over the garden, while happy, vacuous bursts of laughter rose toward the summer sky.

A pair of stage twins, who turned out to be the girls in yellow,

did a baby act in costume, and champagne was served in

glasses bigger than finger-bowls. The moon had risen higher,

and floating in the Sound was a triangle of silver scales, trembling

a little to the stiff, tinny drip of the banjoes on the lawn.

I was still with Jordan Baker. We were sitting at a table with

a man of about my age and a rowdy little girl, who gave way

upon the slightest provocation to uncontrollable laughter. I

was enjoying myself now. I had taken two finger-bowls of

champagne, and the scene had changed before my eyes into

something significant, elemental, and profound.

At a lull in the entertainment the man looked at me and

smiled.

“Your face is familiar,” he said, politely. “Weren’t you in the

Third Division during the war?”

“Why, yes. I was in the Ninth Machine-gun Battalion.”

“I was in the Seventh Infantry until June nineteen-eighteen. I

knew I’d seen you somewhere before.”

We talked for a moment about some wet, gray 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 external world

for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible

prejudice in your favor. It understood you just so far as you

wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to

believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the

impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. Precisely

at that point it vanished — and I was looking at an elegant

young rough-neck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate

formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time

before he introduced himself I’d got a strong impression that

he was picking his words with care.

Almost at the moment when Mr. Gatsby identified himself, a

butler hurried toward him with the information that Chicago

was calling him on the wire. He excused himself with a small

bow that included each of us in turn.

“If you want anything just ask for it, old sport,” he urged me.

“Excuse me. I will rejoin you later.”

When he was gone I turned immediately to Jordan — constrained

to assure her of my surprise. I had expected that Mr.

Gatsby would be a florid and corpulent person in his middle

years.

“Who is he?” I demanded.

“Do you know?”

“He’s just a man named Gatsby.”

“Where is he from, I mean? And what does he do?”

“Now YOU’RE started on the subject,” she answered with a

wan smile. “Well, he told me once he was an Oxford man.” A

dim background started to take shape behind him, but at her

next remark it faded away.

“However, I don’t believe it.”

“Why not?” “I don’t know,” she insisted, “I just don’t think he

went there.”

Something in her tone reminded me of the other girl’s “I

think he killed a man,” and had the effect of stimulating my

curiosity. I would have accepted without question the information that Gatsby sprang from the swamps of Louisiana or from the lower East Side of New York. That was comprehensible.

But young men didn’t — at least in my provincial inexperience

I believed they didn’t — drift coolly out of nowhere

and buy a palace on Long Island Sound.

“Anyhow, he gives large parties,” said Jordan, changing the

subject with an urbane distaste for the concrete. “And I like

large parties. They’re so intimate. At small parties there isn’t

any privacy.”

There was the boom of a bass drum, and the voice of the orchestra

leader rang out suddenly above the echolalia of the

garden.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he cried. “At the request of Mr.

Gatsby we are going to play for you Mr. Vladimir Tostoff’s

latest work, which attracted so much attention at Carnegie

Hall last May. If you read the papers, you know there was a big

sensation.” He smiled with jovial condescension, and added:

“Some sensation!” Whereupon everybody laughed.

“The piece is known,” he concluded lustily, “as Vladimir

Tostoff’s JAZZ HISTORY OF THE WORLD.”

The nature of Mr. Tostoff’s composition eluded me, because

just as it began my eyes fell on Gatsby, standing alone on the

marble steps and looking from one group to another with approving

eyes. His tanned skin was drawn attractively tight on

his face and his short hair looked as though it were trimmed

every day. I could see nothing sinister about him. I wondered if

the fact that he was not drinking helped to set him off from his

guests, for it seemed to me that he grew more correct as the

fraternal hilarity increased. When the JAZZ HISTORY OF THE

WORLD was over, girls were putting their heads on men’s

shoulders in a puppyish, convivial way, girls were swooning

backward playfully into men’s arms, even into groups, knowing

that some one would arrest their falls — but no one swooned

backward on Gatsby, and no French bob touched Gatsby’s

shoulder, and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby’s

head for one link.

“I beg your pardon.”

Gatsby’s butler was suddenly standing beside us.

“Miss Baker?” he inquired. “I beg your pardon, but Mr.

Gatsby would like to speak to you alone.”

“With me?” she exclaimed in surprise.

“Yes, madame.”

She got up slowly, raising her eyebrows at me in astonishment,

and followed the butler toward the house. I noticed that

she wore her evening-dress, all her dresses, like sports clothes

— there was a jauntiness about her movements as if she had

first learned to walk upon golf courses on clean, crisp

mornings.

I was alone and it was almost two. For some time confused

and intriguing sounds had issued from a long, many-windowed

room which overhung the terrace. Eluding Jordan’s undergraduate,

who was now engaged in an obstetrical conversation

with two chorus girls, and who implored me to join him, I went

inside.

The large room was full of people. One of the girls in yellow

was playing the piano, and beside her stood a tall, red-haired

young lady from a famous chorus, engaged in song. She had

drunk a quantity of champagne, and during the course of her

song she had decided, ineptly, that everything was very, very

sad — she was not only singing, she was weeping too. Whenever

there was a pause in the song she filled it with gasping,

broken sobs, and then took up the lyric again in a quavering

soprano. The tears coursed down her cheeks — not freely,

however, for when they came into contact with her heavily

beaded eyelashes they assumed an inky color, and pursued the

rest of their way in slow black rivulets. A humorous suggestion

was made that she sing the notes on her face, whereupon she

threw up her hands, sank into a chair, and went off into a deep

vinous sleep.

“She had a fight with a man who says he’s her husband,” explained

a girl at my elbow.

I looked around. Most of the remaining women were now

having fights with men said to be their husbands. Even

Jordan’s party, the quartet from East Egg, were rent asunder

by dissension. One of the men was talking with curious intensity

to a young actress, and his wife, after attempting to laugh

at the situation in a dignified and indifferent way, broke down

entirely and resorted to flank attacks — at intervals she appeared

suddenly at his side like an angry diamond, and hissed:

“You promised!” into his ear.

The reluctance to go home was not confined to wayward

men. The hall was at present occupied by two deplorably sober

men and their highly indignant wives. The wives were sympathizing

with each other in slightly raised voices.

“Whenever he sees I’m having a good time he wants to go

home.”

“Never heard anything so selfish in my life.”

“We’re always the first ones to leave.”

“So are we.”

“Well, we’re almost the last to-night,” said one of the men

sheepishly. “The orchestra left half an hour ago.”

In spite of the wives’ agreement that such malevolence was

beyond credibility, the dispute ended in a short struggle, and

both wives were lifted, kicking, into the night.

As I waited for my hat in the hall the door of the library

opened and Jordan Baker and Gatsby came out together. He

was saying some last word to her, but the eagerness in his

manner tightened abruptly into formality as several people approached

him to say good-bye.

Jordan’s party were calling impatiently to her from the porch,

but she lingered for a moment to shake hands.

“I’ve just heard the most amazing thing,” she whispered.

“How long were we in there?”

“Why, about an hour.” “It was — simply amazing,” she repeated

abstractedly. “But I swore I wouldn’t tell it and here I

am tantalizing you.” She yawned gracefully in my face: “Please

come and see me… . Phone book … Under the name of Mrs.

Sigourney Howard … My aunt … ” She was hurrying off as she

talked — her brown hand waved a jaunty salute as she melted

into her party at the door.

Rather ashamed that on my first appearance I had stayed so

late, I joined the last of Gatsby’s guests, who were clustered

around him. I wanted to explain that I’d hunted for him early in

the evening and to apologize for not having known him in the

garden.

“Don’t mention it,” he enjoined me eagerly. “Don’t give it another

thought, old sport.” The familiar expression held no more

familiarity than the hand which reassuringly brushed my

shoulder. “And don’t forget we’re going up in the hydroplane

to-morrow morning, at nine o’clock.”

Then the butler, behind his shoulder: “Philadelphia wants

you on the ‘phone, sir.”

“All right, in a minute. Tell them I’ll be right there… . good

night.”

“Good night.”

“Good night.” He smiled — and suddenly there seemed to be

a pleasant significance in having been among the last to go, as

if he had desired it all the time. “Good night, old sport… . good

night.”

But as I walked down the steps I saw that the evening was

not quite over. Fifty feet from the door a dozen headlights illuminated

a bizarre and tumultuous scene. In the ditch beside

the road, right side up, but violently shorn of one wheel, rested

a new coupe 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

tire and from the tire 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 coupe 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,” some one 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 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 no 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 up-stairs

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 five deep with throbbing taxi-cabs, 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 outlined

unintelligible 70 gestures inside. Imagining that I, too, was

hurrying toward gayety 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 every one knew her

name. Then it was something more. I wasn’t actually in love,

but I felt a sort of tender curiosity. The bored haughty face that

she turned to the world concealed something — most affectations

conceal something eventually, even though they don’t in

the beginning — and one day I found what it was. When we

were on a house-party together up in Warwick, she left a borrowed

car out in the rain with the top down, and then lied

about it — and suddenly I remembered the story about her that

had eluded me that night at Daisy’s. At her first big golf tournament

there was a row that nearly reached the newspapers —

a suggestion that she had moved her ball from a bad lie in the

semi-final round. The thing approached the proportions of a

scandal — then died away. A caddy retracted his statement,

and the only other witness admitted that he might have been

mistaken. The incident and the name had remained together in

my mind.

Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever, shrewd men, and

now I saw that this was because she felt safer on a plane

where any divergence from a code would be thought impossible.

She was incurably dishonest. She wasn’t able to endure

being at a disadvantage and, given this unwillingness, I

suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was

very young in order to keep that cool, insolent smile turned to

the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard, jaunty body.

It made no difference to me. Dishonesty in a woman is a

thing you never blame deeply — I was casually sorry, and then

I forgot. It was on that same house party that we had a curious

conversation about driving a car. It started because she passed

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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.”

“Noyou’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 gray, 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 mustache of perspiration appeared on

her upper lip. Nevertheless there was a vague understanding

that had to be tactfully broken off before I was free.

Every one suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues,

and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I

have ever known.

Chapter 4

**O**n Sunday morning while church bells rang in the villages

alongshore, the world and its mistress returned to

Gatsby’s house and twinkled hilariously on his lawn.

“He’s a bootlegger,” said the young ladies, moving somewhere

between his cocktails and his flowers. “One time he

killed a man who had found out that he was nephew to Von

Hindenburg and second cousin to the devil. Reach me a rose,

honey, and pour me a last drop into that there crystal glass.”

Once I wrote down on the empty spaces of a time-table the

names of those who came to Gatsby’s house that summer. It is

an old time-table now, disintegrating at its folds, and headed

“This schedule in effect July 5th, 1922.” But I can still read the

gray 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. Schwartze (the son) and Arthur

McCarty, all connected with the movies in one way or another.

And the Catlips and the Bembergs and G. Earl Muldoon,

brother to that Muldoon who afterward strangled his wife. Da

Fontano the promoter came there, and Ed Legros and James B.

(“Rot-Gut.”) Ferret and the De Jongs and Ernest Lilly — they

came to gamble, and when Ferret wandered into the garden it

meant he was cleaned out and Associated Traction would have

to fluctuate profitably next day.

A man named Klipspringer was there so often and so long

that he became known as “the boarder.”— I doubt if he had

any other home. Of theatrical people there were Gus Waize

and Horace O’donavan and Lester Meyer 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 fiancee, 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 or

rigid sitting in youth and, even more, with the formless grace

of our nervous, sporadic games. This quality was continually

breaking through his punctilious manner in the shape of restlessness.

He was never quite still; there was always a tapping

foot somewhere or the impatient opening and closing of a

hand.

He saw me looking with admiration at his car.

“It’s pretty, isn’t it, old sport?” He jumped off to give me a

better view. “Haven’t you ever seen it before?”

I’d seen it. Everybody had seen it. It was a rich cream color,

bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous

length with triumphant hat-boxes and supper-boxes and toolboxes,

and terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that

mirrored a dozen suns. Sitting down behind many layers of

glass in a sort of green leather conservatory, we started to

town.

I had talked with him perhaps half a dozen times in the past

month and found, to my disappointment, that he had little to

say: So my first impression, that he was a person of some undefined

consequence, had gradually faded and he had become

simply the proprietor of an elaborate road-house next door.

And then came that disconcerting ride. We hadn’t reached

West Egg village before Gatsby began leaving his elegant sentences

unfinished and slapping himself indecisively on the knee

of his caramel-colored suit.

“Look here, old sport,” he broke out surprisingly. “What’s

your opinion of me, anyhow?” A little overwhelmed, I began the

generalized evasions which that question deserves.

“Well, I’m going to tell you something about my life,” he interrupted.

“I don’t want you to get a wrong idea of me from all

these stories you hear.”

So he was aware of the bizarre accusations that flavored conversation

in his halls.

“I’ll tell you God’s truth.” His right hand suddenly ordered divine

retribution to stand by. “I am the son of some wealthy

people in the Middle West — all dead now. I was brought up in

America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors

have been educated there for many years. It is a family

tradition.”

He looked at me sideways — and I knew why Jordan Baker

had believed he was lying. He hurried the phrase “educated at

Oxford,” or swallowed it, or choked on it, as though it had

bothered him before. And with this doubt, his whole statement

fell to pieces, and I wondered if there wasn’t something a little

sinister about him, after all.

“What part of the Middle West?” I inquired casually.

“San Francisco.”

“I see.”

“My family all died and I came into a good deal of money.”

His voice was solemn, as if the memory of that sudden extinction

of a clan still haunted him. For a moment I suspected

that he was pulling my leg, but a glance at him convinced me

otherwise.

“After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of

Europe — Paris, Venice, Rome — collecting jewels, chiefly rubies,

hunting big game, painting a little, things for myself only,

and trying to forget something very sad that had happened to

me long ago.”

With an effort I managed to restrain my incredulous

laughter. The very phrases were worn so threadbare that they

evoked no image except that of a turbaned “character.” leaking

sawdust at every pore as he pursued a tiger through the Bois

de Boulogne.

“Then came the war, old sport. It was a great relief, and I

tried very hard to die, but I seemed to bear an enchanted life. I accepted a commission as first lieutenant when it began.

In the Argonne Forest I took two machine-gun detachments 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 Dorcaster.”

It was a photograph of half a dozen young men in blazers

loafing in an archway through which were visible a host of

spires. There was Gatsby, looking a little, not much, younger —

with a cricket bat in his hand.

Then it was all true. I saw the skins of tigers flaming in his

palace on the Grand Canal; I saw him opening a chest of rubies

to ease, with their crimson-lighted depths, the gnawings of his

broken heart.

“I’m going to make a big request of you to-day,” he said,

pocketing his souvenirs with satisfaction, “so I thought you

ought to know something about me. I didn’t want you to think I was just some nobody. You see, I usually find myself among strangers because I drift here and there trying to forget the sad thing that happened to me.” He hesitated. “You’ll hear about it this afternoon.”

“At lunch?”

“No, this afternoon. I happened to find out that you’re taking

Miss Baker to tea.”

“Do you mean you’re in love with Miss Baker?”

“No, old sport, I’m not. But Miss Baker has kindly consented

to speak to you about this matter.”

I hadn’t the faintest idea what “this matter.” was, but I was

more annoyed than interested. I hadn’t asked Jordan to tea in

order to discuss Mr. Jay Gatsby. I was sure the request would

be something utterly fantastic, and for a moment I was sorry

I’d ever set foot upon his overpopulated lawn.

He wouldn’t say another word. His correctness grew on him

as we neared the city. We passed Port Roosevelt, where there

was a glimpse of red-belted ocean-going ships, and sped along

a cobbled slum lined with the dark, undeserted saloons of the

faded-gilt 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 Long Island City — only half, for as we twisted among the

pillars of the elevated I heard the familiar “jug — jug — SPAT!”

of a motorcycle, and a frantic policeman rode alongside.

“All right, old sport,” called Gatsby. We slowed down. Taking

a white card from his wallet, he waved it before the man’s

eyes.

“Right you are,” agreed the policeman, tipping his cap.

“Know you next time, Mr. Gatsby. Excuse ME!”

“What was that?” I inquired.

“The picture of Oxford?”

“I was able to do the commissioner a favor once, and he

sends me a Christmas card every year.”

Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders

making a constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city

rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps all

built with a wish out of non-olfactory money. The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.

A dead man passed us in a hearse heaped with blooms, followed

by two carriages with drawn blinds, and by more cheerful

carriages for friends. The friends looked out at us with the

tragic eyes and short upper lips of 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. Wolfsheim.”

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 halfdarkness.

“— So I took one look at him,” said Mr. Wolfsheim, 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 sid: ‘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. Wolfsheim 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. Wolfsheim, looking

at the Presbyterian nymphs on the ceiling. “But I like across

the street better!”

“Yes, highballs,” agreed Gatsby, and then to Mr. Wolfsheim:

“It’s too hot over there.”

“Hot and small — yes,” said Mr. Wolfsheim, “but full of

memories.”

“What place is that?” I asked.

“The old Metropole.

“The old Metropole,” brooded Mr. Wolfsheim 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. Wolfsheim’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. Wolfsheim seemed disappointed.

“This is just a friend. I told you we’d talk about that some

other time.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Mr. Wolfsheim, “I had a wrong

man.”

A succulent hash arrived, and Mr. Wolfsheim, 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. Wolfsheim at the table.

“He has to telephone,” said Mr. Wolfsheim, 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. Wolfsheim 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.

Wolfsheim 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 Wolfsheim? 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 some one.” When he saw us Tom jumped up and took

half a dozen steps in our direction.

“Where’ve you been?” he demamded eagerly. “Daisy’s furious

because you haven’t called up.”

“This is Mr. Gatsby, Mr. Buchanan.”

They shook hands briefly, and a strained, unfamiliar look of

embarrassment came over Gatsby’s face.

“How’ve you been, anyhow?” demanded Tom of me. “How’d

you happen to come up this far to eat?”

“I’ve been having lunch with Mr. Gatsby.”

I turned toward Mr. Gatsby, but he was no longer there.

One October day in nineteen-seventeen ——

(said Jordan Baker that afternoon, sitting up very straight on

a straight chair in the tea-garden at the Plaza Hotel)

— I was walking along from one place to another, half on the

sidewalks and half on the lawns. I was happier on the lawns because

I had on shoes from England with rubber nobs on the

soles that bit into the soft ground. I had on a new plaid skirt

also that blew a little in the wind, and whenever this happened

the red, white, and blue banners in front of all the houses

stretched out stiff and said TUT-TUT-TUT-TUT, in a disapproving

way.

The largest of the banners and the largest of the lawns belonged

to Daisy Fay’s house. She was just eighteen, two years

older than me, and by far the most popular of all the young

girls in Louisville. She dressed in white, and had a little white

roadster, and all day long the telephone rang in her house and

excited young officers from Camp Taylor demanded the privilege

of monopolizing her that night. “Anyways, for an hour!”

When I came opposite her house that morning her white

roadster was beside the curb, and she was sitting in it with a

lieutenant I had never seen before. They were so engrossed in

each other that she didn’t see me until I was five feet away.

“Hello, Jordan,” she called unexpectedly. “Please come

here.”

I was flattered that she wanted to speak to me, because of all

the older girls I admired her most. She asked me if I was going

to the Red Cross and make bandages. I was. Well, then, would

I tell them that she couldn’t come that day? The officer looked at Daisy while she was speaking, in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at sometime, and because it seemed romantic to me I have remembered the incident ever since. His

name was Jay Gatsby, and I didn’t lay eyes on him again for over four years — even after I’d met him on Long Island I didn’t realize it was the same man.

That was nineteen-seventeen. By the next year I had a few

beaux myself, and I began to play in tournaments, so I didn’t

see Daisy very often. She went with a slightly older crowd —

when she went with anyone at all. Wild rumors were circulating

about her — how her mother had found her packing her

bag one winter night to go to New York and say good-by to a

soldier who was going overseas. She was effectually prevented,

but she wasn’t on speaking terms with her family for several

weeks. After that she didn’t play around with the soldiers any

more, but only with a few flat-footed, short-sighted young men

in town, who couldn’t get into the army at all.

By the next autumn she was gay again, gay as ever. She had

a debut 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

Seelbach Hotel, and the day before the wedding he gave her a

string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand

dollars.

I was bridesmaid. I came into her room half an hour before

the bridal dinner, and found her lying on her bed as lovely as

the June night in her flowered dress — and as drunk as a monkey.

she had a bottle of Sauterne in one hand and a letter in

the other.

“‘Gratulate me,” she muttered. “Never had a drink before,

but oh how I do enjoy it.”

“What’s the matter, Daisy?”

I was scared, I can tell you; I’d never seen a girl like that

before.

“Here, deares’.” She groped around in a waste-basket she

had with her on the bed and pulled out the string of pearls.

“Take ’em down-stairs and give ’em back to whoever theybelong to. Tell ’em all Daisy’s change’ her mine. Say: ‘Daisy’s change’ her mine!’.”

She began to cry — she cried and cried. I rushed out and

found her mother’s maid, and we locked the door and got her

into a cold bath. She wouldn’t let go of the letter. She took it

into the tub with her and squeezed it up into a wet ball, and

only let me leave it in the soap-dish when she saw that it was

coming to pieces like snow.

But she didn’t say another word. We gave her spirits of ammonia

and put ice on her forehead and hooked her back into

her dress, and half an hour later, when we walked out of the

room, the pearls were around her neck and the incident was

over. Next day at five o’clock she married Tom Buchanan

without so much as a shiver, and started off on a three months’

trip to the South Seas.

I saw them in Santa Barbara when they came back, and I

thought I’d never seen a girl so mad about her husband. If he

left the room for a minute she’d look around uneasily, and say:

“Where’s Tom gone?” and wear the most abstracted expression

until she saw him coming in the door. She used to sit on the

sand with his head in her lap by the hour, rubbing her fingers

over his eyes and looking at him with unfathomable delight. It

was touching to see them together — it made you laugh in a

hushed, fascinated way. That was in August. A week after I left

Santa Barbara Tom ran into a wagon on the Ventura road one

night, and ripped a front wheel off his car. The girl who was

with him got into the papers, too, because her arm was broken

— she was one of the chambermaids in the Santa Barbara

Hotel.

The next April Daisy had her little girl, and they went to

France for a year. I saw them one spring in Cannes, and later

in Deauville, and then they came back to Chicago to settle

down. Daisy was popular in Chicago, as you know. They moved

with a fast crowd, all of them young and rich and wild, but she

came out with an absolutely perfect reputation. Perhaps because

she doesn’t drink. It’s a great advantage not to drink

among hard-drinking people. You can hold your tongue, and,

moreover, you can time any little irregularity of your own so

that everybody else is so blind that they don’t see or care.

Perhaps Daisy never went in for amour at all — and yet there’s

something in that voice of hers… .

Well, about six weeks ago, she heard the name Gatsby for the

first time in years. It was when I asked you — do you remember?—

if you knew Gatsby in West Egg. After you had gone

home she came into my room and woke me up, and said: “What

Gatsby?” and when I described him — I was half asleep — she

said in the strangest voice that it must be the man she used to

know. It wasn’t until then that I connected this Gatsby with the

officer in her white car.

When Jordan Baker had finished telling all this we had left

the Plaza for half an hour and were driving in a victoria

through Central Park. The sun had gone down behind the tall

apartments of the movie stars in the West Fifties, and the clear

voices of girls, 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 are asleep

Into your tent I’ll creep ——”

“It was a strange coincidence,” I said.

“But it wasn’t a coincidence at all.”

“Why not?”

“Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across

the bay.”

Then it had not been merely the stars to which he had aspired

on that June night. He came alive to me, delivered suddenly

from the womb of his purposeless splendor.

“He wants to know,” continued Jordan, “if you’ll invite Daisy

to your house some afternoon and then let him come over.”

The modesty of the demand shook me. He had waited five

years and bought a mansion where he dispensed starlight to

casual moths — so that he could “come over.” some afternoon

to a stranger’s garden.

“Did I have to know all this before he could ask such a little

thing?”

“He’s afraid, he’s waited so long. He thought you might be

offended. You see, he’s a regular tough underneath it all.”

Something worried me.

“Why didn’t he ask you to arrange a meeting?”

“He wants her to see his house,” she explained. “And your

house is right next door.”

“Oh!”

“I think he half expected her to wander into one of his

parties, some night,” went on Jordan, “but she never did. Then

he began asking people casually if they knew her, and I was

the first one he found. It was that night he sent for me at his

dance, and you should have heard the elaborate way he

worked up to it. Of course, I immediately suggested a luncheon

in New York — and I thought he’d go mad:

“‘I don’t want to do anything out of the way!’ he kept saying.

‘I want to see her right next door.’

“When I said you were a particular friend of Tom’s, he started

to abandon the whole idea. He doesn’t know very much

about Tom, though he says he’s read a Chicago paper for years

just on the chance of catching a glimpse of Daisy’s name.”

It was dark now, and as we dipped under a little bridge I put

my arm around Jordan’s golden shoulder and drew her toward

me and asked her to dinner. Suddenly I wasn’t thinking of

Daisy and Gatsby any more, but of this clean, hard, limited person,

who dealt in universal 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 facade of

Fifty-ninth Street, a block of delicate pale light, beamed down

into the park. Unlike Gatsby and Tom Buchanan, I had no girl

whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and

blinding signs, and so I drew up the girl beside me, tightening

my arms. Her wan, scornful mouth smiled, and so I drew her

up again closer, this time to my face.

Chapter 5

**W**hen 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-thebox.”

with all the house thrown open to the game. But there

wasn’t a sound. Only wind in the trees, which blew the wires

and made the lights go off and on again as if the house had

winked into the darkness. As my taxi groaned away I saw

Gatsby walking toward me across his lawn.

“Your place looks like the World’s Fair,” I said.

“Does it?” He turned his eyes toward it absently. “I have

been glancing into some of the rooms. Let’s go to Coney Island,

old sport. In my car.”

“It’s too late.”

“Well, suppose we take a plunge in the swimming-pool? I

haven’t made use of it all summer.”

“I’ve got to go to bed.”

“All right.”

He waited, looking at me with suppressed eagerness.

“I talked with Miss Baker,” I said after a moment. “I’m going

to call up Daisy to-morrow and invite her over here to tea.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” he said carelessly. “I don’t want to put

you to any trouble.”

“What day would suit you?”

“What day would suit YOU?” he corrected me quickly. “I

don’t want to put you to any trouble, you see.”

“How about the day after to-morrow?” He considered for a

moment. Then, with reluctance:

“I want to get the grass cut,” he said.

We both looked at the grass — there was a sharp line where

my ragged lawn ended and the darker, well-kept expanse of his

began. I suspected that he meant my grass.

“There’s another little thing,” he said uncertainly, and

hesitated.

“Would you rather put it off for a few days?” I asked.

“Oh, it isn’t about that. At least ——” He fumbled with a

series of beginnings. “Why, I thought — why, look here, old

sport, you don’t make much money, do you?”

“Not very much.”

This seemed to reassure him and he continued more

confidently.

“I thought you didn’t, if you’ll pardon 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 Wolfsheim.”

Evidently he thought that I was shying away from the “gonnegtion.”

mentioned at lunch, but I assured him he was wrong. He

waited a moment longer, hoping I’d begin a conversation, but I

was too absorbed to be responsive, so he went unwillingly

home.

The evening had made me light-headed and happy; I think I

walked into a deep sleep as I entered my front door. So I didn’t

know whether or not Gatsby went to Coney Island, or for how

many hours he “glanced into rooms.” while his house blazed

gaudily on. I called up Daisy from the office next morning, and

invited her to come to tea.

“Don’t bring Tom,” I warned her.

“What?”

“Don’t bring Tom.”

“Who is ‘Tom’?” she asked innocently.

The day agreed upon was pouring rain. At eleven o’clock a

man in a raincoat, dragging a lawn-mower, tapped at my front

door and said that Mr. Gatsby had sent him over to cut my

grass. This reminded me that I had forgotten to tell my Finn to

come back, so I drove into West Egg Village to search for her

among soggy, whitewashed alleys and to buy some cups and

lemons and flowers.

The flowers were unnecessary, for at two o’clock a greenhouse

arrived from Gatsby’s, with innumerable receptacles to

contain it. An hour later the front door opened nervously, and

Gatsby, in a white flannel suit, silver shirt, and gold-colored tie,

hurried in. He was pale, and there were dark signs of sleeplessness

beneath his eyes.

“Is everything all right?” he asked immediately.

“The grass looks fine, if that’s what you mean.”

“What grass?” he inquired blankly. “Oh, the grass in the

yard.” He looked out the window at it, but, judging from his expression,

I don’t believe he saw a thing.

“Looks very good,” he remarked vaguely. “One of the papers

said they thought the rain would stop about four. I think it was

the JOURNAL. Have you got everything you need in the shape

of — of tea?”

I took him into the pantry, where he looked a little reproachfully

at the Finn. Together we scrutinized the twelve lemon

cakes from the delicatessen shop.

“Will they do?” I asked.

“Of course, of course! They’re fine!” and he added hollowly,

“… old sport.”

The rain cooled about half-past three to a damp mist,

through which occasional thin drops swam like dew. Gatsby

looked with vacant eyes through a copy of Clay’s ECONOMICS,

starting at the Finnish tread that shook the kitchen floor, and

peering toward the bleared windows from time to time as if a

series of invisible but alarming happenings were taking place

outside. Finally he got up and informed me, in an uncertain

voice, that he was going home.

“Why’s that?”

“Nobody’s coming to tea. It’s too late!” He looked at his

watch as if there was some pressing demand on his time elsewhere.

“I can’t wait all day.”

“Don’t be silly; it’s just two minutes to four.”

He sat down miserably, as if I had pushed him, and simultaneously

there was the sound of a motor turning into my lane. We

both jumped up, and, a little harrowed myself, I went out into

the yard.

Under the dripping bare lilac-trees a large open car was

coming up the drive. It stopped. Daisy’s face, tipped sideways

beneath a three-cornered lavender hat, looked out at me with a

bright ecstatic smile.

“Is this absolutely where you live, my dearest one?”

The exhilarating ripple of her voice was a wild tonic in the

rain. I had to follow the sound of it for a moment, up and down,

with my ear alone, before any words came through. A damp

streak of hair lay like a dash of blue paint across her cheek,

and her hand was wet with glistening drops as I took it to help

her from the car.

“Are you in love with me,” she said low in my ear, “or why

did I have to come alone?”

“That’s the secret of Castle Rackrent. Tell your chauffeur to

go far away and spend an hour.”

“Come back in an hour, Ferdie.” Then in a grave murmur:

“His name is Ferdie.”

“Does the gasoline affect his nose?”

“I don’t think so,” she said innocently. “Why?”

We went in. To my overwhelming surprise the living-room

was deserted.

“Well, that’s funny,” I exclaimed.

“What’s funny?”

She turned her head as there was a light dignified knocking

at the front door. I went out and opened it. Gatsby, pale as

death, with his hands plunged like weights in his coat pockets,

was standing in a puddle of water glaring tragically into my

eyes.

With his hands still in his coat pockets he stalked by me into

the hall, turned sharply as if he were on a wire, and disappeared

into the living-room. It wasn’t a bit funny. Aware of the loud beating of my own heart I pulled the door to against the increasing rain.

For half a minute there wasn’t a sound. Then from the livingroom

I heard a sort of choking murmur and part of a laugh, followed

by Daisy’s voice on a clear artificial note: “I certainly am

awfully glad to see you again.”

A pause; it endured horribly. I had nothing to do in the hall,

so I went into the room.

Gatsby, his hands still in his pockets, was reclining against

the mantelpiece in a strained counterfeit of perfect ease, even

of boredom. His head leaned back so far that it rested against

the face of a defunct mantelpiece clock, and from this position

his distraught eyes stared down at Daisy, who was sitting,

frightened but graceful, on the edge of a stiff chair.

“We’ve met before,” muttered Gatsby. His eyes glanced momentarily

at me, and his lips parted with an abortive attempt at

a laugh. Luckily the clock took this moment to tilt dangerously

at the pressure of his head, whereupon he turned and caught it

with trembling fingers, and set it back in place. Then he sat

down, rigidly, his elbow on the arm of the sofa and his chin in

his hand.

“I’m sorry about the clock,” he said.

My own face had now assumed a deep tropical burn. I

couldn’t muster up a single commonplace out of the thousand

in my head.

“It’s an old clock,” I told them idiotically.

I think we all believed for a moment that it had smashed in

pieces on the floor.

“We haven’t met for many years,” said Daisy, her voice as

matter-of-fact as it could ever be.

“Five years next November.”

The automatic quality of Gatsby’s answer set us all back at

least another minute. I had them both on their feet with the

desperate suggestion that they help me make tea in the kitchen

when the demoniac Finn brought it in on a tray.

Amid the welcome confusion of cups and cakes a certain

physical decency established itself. Gatsby got himself into a

shadow and, while Daisy and I talked, looked conscientiously

from one to the other of us with tense, unhappy eyes. However, as calmness wasn’t an end in itself, I made an excuse at the first possible moment, and got to my feet.

“Where are you going?” demanded Gatsby in immediate

alarm.

“I’ll be back.”

“I’ve got to speak to you about something before you go.”

He followed me wildly into the kitchen, closed the door, and

whispered:

“Oh, God!” in a miserable way.

“What’s the matter?”

“This is a terrible mistake,” he said, shaking his head from

side to side, “a terrible, terrible mistake.”

“You’re just embarrassed, that’s all,” and luckily I added:

“Daisy’s embarrassed too.”

“She’s embarrassed?” he repeated incredulously.

“Just as much as you are.”

“Don’t talk so loud.”

“You’re acting like a little boy,” I broke out impatiently. “Not

only that, but you’re rude. Daisy’s sitting in there all alone.”

He raised his hand to stop my words, looked at me with unforgettable

reproach, and, opening the door cautiously, went

back into the other room.

I walked out the back way — just as Gatsby had when he had

made his nervous circuit of the house half an hour before —

and ran for a huge black knotted tree, whose massed leaves

made a fabric against the rain. Once more it was pouring, and

my irregular lawn, well-shaved by Gatsby’s gardener, abounded

in small, muddy swamps and prehistoric marshes. There

was nothing to look at from under the tree except Gatsby’s

enormous house, so I stared at it, like Kant at his church

steeple, for half an hour. A brewer had built it early in the

“period.” craze, a decade before, and there was a story that

he’d agreed to pay five years’ taxes on all the neighboring cottages

if the owners would have their roofs thatched with straw.

Perhaps their refusal took the heart out of his plan to Found a

Family — he went into an immediate decline. His children sold

his house with the black wreath still on the door. Americans,

while occasionally willing 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 a 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 up-stairs to wash her face — too late I thought

with humiliation of my towels — while Gatsby and I waited on

the lawn.

“My house looks well, doesn’t it?” he demanded. “See how

the whole front of it catches the light.”

I agreed that it was splendid.

“Yes.” His eyes went over it, every arched door and square

tower. “It took me just three years to earn the money that

bought it.”

“I thought you inherited your money.”

“I did, old sport,” he said automatically, “but I lost most of it

in the big panic — the panic of the war.”

I think he hardly knew what he was saying, for when I asked

him what business he was in he answered, “That’s my affair,”

before he realized that it wasn’t the appropriate reply.

“Oh, I’ve been in several things,” he corrected himself. “I

was in the drug business and then I was in the oil business. But

I’m not in either one now.” He looked at me with more attention.

“Do you mean you’ve been thinking over what I proposed

the other night?”

Before I could answer, Daisy came out of the house and two

rows of brass buttons on her dress gleamed in the sunlight.

“That huge place THERE?” she cried pointing.

“Do you like it?”

“I love it, but I don’t see how you live there all alone.”

“I keep it always full of interesting people, night and day.

People who do interesting things. Celebrated people.”

Instead of taking the short cut along the Sound we went

down the road and entered by the big postern. With enchanting

murmurs Daisy admired this aspect or that of the feudal silhouette

against the sky, admired the gardens, the sparkling

odor of jonquils and the frothy odor of hawthorn and plum blossoms

and the pale gold odor 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 musicrooms

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 up-stairs, through period bedrooms swathed in rose

and lavender silk and vivid with new flowers, through dressingrooms

and poolrooms, and bathrooms with sunken baths — intruding into one chamber where a dishevelled man in pajamas 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 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

overwound clock.

Recovering himself in a minute he opened for us two hulking

patent cabinets which held his massed suits and dressinggowns

and ties, and his shirts, piled like bricks in stacks a

dozen high.

“I’ve got a man in England who buys me clothes. He sends

over a selection of things at the beginning of each season,

spring and fall.”

He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by

one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel,

which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in

many-colored disarray. While we admired he brought more and

the soft rich heap mounted higher — shirts with stripes and

scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, and 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 mid-summer

flowers — but outside Gatsby’s window it began to rain again,

so we stood in a row looking at the corrugated surface of the

Sound.

“If it wasn’t for the mist we could see your home across the

bay,” said Gatsby. “You always have a green light that burns all

night at the end of your dock.”

Daisy put her arm through his abruptly, but he seemed absorbed

in what he had just said. Possibly it had occurred to him

that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished

forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated

him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching

her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it

was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects

had diminished by one.

I began to walk about the room, examining various indefinite

objects in the half darkness. A large photograph of an elderly

man in yachting costume attracted me, hung on the wall over

his desk.

“Who’s this?”

“That? That’s Mr. Dan Cody, old sport.”

The name sounded faintly familiar.

“He’s dead now. He used to be my best friend years ago.”

There was a small picture of Gatsby, also in yachting costume,

on the bureau — Gatsby with his head thrown back defiantly

— taken apparently when he was about eighteen.

“I adore it,” exclaimed Daisy. “The pompadour! You never

told me you had a pompadour — or a yacht.”

“Look at this,” said Gatsby quickly. “Here’s a lot of clippings

— about you.”

They stood side by side examining it. I was going to ask to

see the rubies when the phone rang, and Gatsby took up the

receiver.

“Yes… . well, I can’t talk now… . I can’t talk now, old sport…

. I said a SMALL town… . he must know what a small town is…

. well, he’s no use to us if Detroit is his idea of a small town… .”

He rang off.

“Come here QUICK!” cried Daisy at the window.

The rain was still falling, but the darkness had parted in the

west, and there was a pink and golden billow of foamy clouds

above the sea.

“Look at that,” she whispered, and then after a moment: “I’d

like to just get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and

push you around.”

I tried to go then, but they wouldn’t hear of it; perhaps my

presence made them feel more satisfactorily alone.

“I know what we’ll do,” said Gatsby, “we’ll have Klipspringer

play the piano.”

He went out of the room calling “Ewing!” and returned in a

few minutes accompanied by an embarrassed, slightly worn

young man, with shell-rimmed glasses and scanty blond hair.

He was now decently clothed in a “sport shirt,” open at the

neck, sneakers, and duck trousers of a nebulous hue.

“Did we interrupt your exercises?” inquired Daisy politely.

“I was asleep,” cried Mr. Klipspringer, in a spasm of embarrassment.

“That is, I’d BEEN asleep. Then I got up… .”

“Klipspringer plays the piano,” said Gatsby, cutting him off.

“Don’t you, Ewing, old sport?”

“I don’t play well. I don’t — I hardly play at all. I’m all out of

prac ——”

“We’ll go down-stairs,” interrupted Gatsby. He flipped a

switch. The gray windows disappeared as the house glowed full

of light.

In the music-room Gatsby turned on a solitary lamp beside

the piano. He lit Daisy’s cigarette from a trembling match, and

sat down with her on a couch far across the room, where there

was no light save what the gleaming floor bounced in from the

hall.

When Klipspringer had played THE LOVE NEST. he turned

around on the bench and searched unhappily for Gatsby in the

gloom.

“I’m all out of practice, you see. I told you I couldn’t play. I’m

all out of prac ——”

“Don’t talk so much, old sport,” commanded Gatsby. “Play!”

“IN THE MORNING,

IN THE EVENING,

AIN’T WE GOT FUN——”

Outside the wind was loud and there was a faint flow of thunder

along the Sound. All the lights were going on in West Egg

now; the electric trains, men-carrying, were plunging home

through the rain from New York. It was the hour of a profound

human change, and excitement was generating on the air.

“ONE THING’S SURE AND NOTHING’S SURER

THE RICH GET RICHER AND THE POOR GET— CHILDREN.

IN THE MEANTIME,

IN BETWEEN TIME——”

As I went over to say good-by 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 whe 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 will store up in his ghostly heart.

As I watched him he adjusted himself a little, visibly. His

hand took hold of hers, and as she said something low in his

ear he turned toward her with a rush of emotion. I think that

voice held him most, with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because

it couldn’t be over-dreamed — that voice was a deathless

song.

They had forgotten me, but Daisy glanced up and held out

her hand; Gatsby didn’t know me now at all. I looked once

more at them and they looked back at me, remotely, possessed

by intense life. Then I went out of the room and down the

marble steps into the rain, leaving them there together.

Chapter 6

**A**bout this time an ambitious young reporter from New

York arrived one morning at Gatsby’s door and asked him

if he had anything to say.

“Anything to say about what?” inquired Gatsby politely.

“Why — any statement to give out.”

It transpired after a confused five minutes that the man had

heard Gatsby’s name around his office in a connection which

he either wouldn’t reveal or didn’t fully understand. This was

his day off and with laudable initiative he had hurried out “to

see.”

It was a random shot, and yet the reporter’s instinct was

right. Gatsby’s notoriety, spread about by the hundreds who

had accepted his hospitality and so become authorities on his

past, had increased all summer until he fell just short of being

news. Contemporary legends such as the “underground 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-absorbtion he took for granted.

But his heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque

and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A

universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain

while the clock ticked on the wash-stand and the moon soaked

with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. Each night he

added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed

down upon some vivid scene with an oblivious embrace. For a

while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination;

they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise

that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy’s

wing.

An instinct toward his future glory had led him, some months

before, to the small Lutheran college of St. Olaf 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 savory

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 knowledge to the turgid subjournalism

of 1902. He had been coasting along all too hospitable

shores for five years when he turned up as James Gatz’s

destiny at Little Girls Point.

To the young Gatz, resting on his oars and looking up at the

railed deck, the yacht represented all the beauty and glamour

in the world. I suppose he smiled at Cody — he had probably

discovered that people liked him when he smiled. At any rate

Cody asked him a few questions (one of them elicited the brand

new name) and found that he was quick and extravagantly ambitious.

A few days later he took him to Duluth and bought him

a blue coat, six pair of white duck trousers, and a yachting cap.

And when the TUOLOMEE left for the West Indies and the Barbary

Coast Gatsby left too.

He was employed in a vague personal capacity — while he

remained with Cody he was in turn steward, mate, skipper,

secretary, and even jailor, for Dan Cody sober knew what lavish

doings Dan Cody drunk might soon be about, and he

provided for such contingencies by reposing more and more

trust in Gatsby. The arrangement lasted five years, during

which the boat went three times around the Continent. It might

have lasted indefinitely except for the fact that Ella Kaye came

on board one night in Boston and a week later Dan Cody inhospitably

died.

I remember the portrait of him up in Gatsby’s bedroom, a

gray, 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 rumors about his

antecedents, which weren’t even faintly true. Moreover he told

it to me at a time of confusion, when I had reached the point of

believing everything and nothing about him. So I take advantage

of this short halt, while Gatsby, so to speak, caught his

breath, to clear this set of misconceptions away.

It was a halt, too, in my association with his affairs. For several

weeks I didn’t see him or hear his voice on the phone —

mostly I was in New York, trotting around with Jordan and trying

to ingratiate myself with her senile aunt — but finally I

went over to his house one Sunday afternoon. I hadn’t been

there two minutes when somebody brought Tom Buchanan in

for a drink. I was startled, naturally, but the really surprising

thing was that it hadn’t happened before.

They were a party of three on horseback — Tom and a man

named Sloane and a pretty woman in a brown riding-habit,

who had been there previously.

“I’m delighted to see you,” said Gatsby, standing on his

porch. “I’m delighted that you dropped in.”

As though they cared!

“Sit right down. Have a cigarette or a cigar.” He walked

around the room quickly, ringing bells. “I’ll have something to

drink for you in just a minute.”

He was profoundly affected by the fact that Tom was there.

But he would be uneasy anyhow until he had given them

something, realizing in a vague way that that was all they came

for. Mr. Sloane wanted nothing. A lemonade? No, thanks. A

little champagne? Nothing at all, thanks… . I’m sorry ——

“Did you have a nice ride?”

“Very good roads around here.”

“I suppose the automobiles ——”

“Yeah.”

Moved by an irresistible impulse, Gatsby turned to Tom, who

had accepted the introduction as a stranger.

“I believe we’ve met somewhere before, Mr. Buchanan.”

“Oh, yes,” said Tom, gruffly polite, but obviously not remembering.

“So we did. I remember very well.”

“About two weeks ago.”

“That’s right. You were with Nick here.”

“I know your wife,” continued Gatsby, almost aggressively.

“That so?”

Tom turned to me.

“You live near here, Nick?”

“Next door.”

“That so?”

Mr. Sloane didn’t enter into the conversation, but lounged

back haughtily in his chair; the woman said nothing either —

until unexpectedly, after two highballs, she became cordial.

“We’ll all come over to your next party, Mr. Gatsby,” she suggested.

“What do you say?”

“Certainly; I’d be delighted to have you.”

“Be ver’ nice,” said Mr. Sloane, without gratitude. “Well —

think ought to be starting home.”

“Please don’t hurry,” Gatsby urged them. He had control of

himself now, and he wanted to see more of Tom. “Why don’t

you — why don’t you stay for supper? I wouldn’t be surprised if

some other people dropped in from New York.”

“You come to supper with ME,” said the lady enthusiastically.

“Both of you.”

This included me. Mr. Sloane got to his feet.

“Come along,” he said — but to her only.

“I mean it,” she insisted. “I’d love to have you. Lots of room.”

Gatsby looked at me questioningly. He wanted to go, and he

didn’t see that Mr. Sloane had determined he shouldn’t.

“I’m afraid I won’t be able to,” I said.

“Well, you come,” she urged, concentrating on Gatsby.

Mr. Sloane murmured something close to her ear.

“We won’t be late if we start now,” she insisted aloud.

“I haven’t got a horse,” said Gatsby. “I used to ride in the

army, but I’ve never bought a horse. I’ll have to follow you in

my car. Excuse me for just a minute.”

The rest of us walked out on the porch, where Sloane and the

lady began an impassioned conversation aside.

“My God, I believe the man’s coming,” said Tom. “Doesn’t he

know she doesn’t want him?”

“She says she does want him.”

“She has a big dinner party and he won’t know a soul there.”

He frowned. “I wonder where in the devil he met Daisy. By

God, I may be old-fashioned in my ideas, but women run

around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of

crazy fish.”

Suddenly Mr. Sloane and the lady walked down the steps and

mounted their horses.

“Come on,” said Mr. Sloane to Tom, “we’re late. We’ve got to

go.” And then to me: “Tell him we couldn’t wait, will you?”

Tom and I shook hands, the rest of us exchanged a cool nod,

and they trotted quickly down the drive, disappearing under

the August foliage just as Gatsby, with hat and light overcoat in

hand, came out the front door.

Tom was evidently perturbed at Daisy’s running around

alone, for on the following Saturday night he came with her to

Gatsby’s party. Perhaps his presence gave the evening its peculiar

quality of oppressiveness — it stands out in my memory

from Gatsby’s other parties that summer. There were the same

people, or at least the same sort of people, the same profusion

of champagne, the same many-colored, many-keyed commotion,

but I felt an unpleasantness in the air, a pervading harshness

that hadn’t been there before. Or perhaps I had merely

grown used to it, grown to accept West Egg as a world complete

in itself, with its own standards and its own great figures,

second to nothing because it had no consciousness of being so,

and now I was looking at it again, through Daisy’s eyes. It is invariably

saddening to look through new eyes at things upon

which you have expended your own powers of adjustment.

They arrived at twilight, and, as we strolled out among the

sparkling hundreds, Daisy’s voice was playing murmurous

tricks in her throat.

“These things excite me so,” she whispered.

“If you want to kiss me any time during the evening, Nick,

just let me know and I’ll be glad to arrange it for you. Just mention my name. Or present a green card. I’m giving out green ——”

“Look around,” suggested Gatsby.

“I’m looking around. I’m having a marvelous ——”

“You must see the faces of many people you’ve heard about.”

Tom’s arrogant eyes roamed the crowd.

“We don’t go around very much,” he said. “In fact, I was just

thinking I don’t know a soul here.”

“Perhaps you know that lady.” Gatsby indicated a gorgeous,

scarcely human orchid of a woman who sat in state under a

white plum tree. Tom and Daisy stared, with that peculiarly unreal

feeling that accompanies the recognition of a hitherto

ghostly celebrity of the movies.

“She’s lovely,” said Daisy.

“The man bending over her is her director.”

He took them ceremoniously from group to group:

“Mrs. Buchanan … and Mr. Buchanan ——” After an instant’s

hesitation he added: “the polo player.”

“Oh no,” objected Tom quickly, “not me.”

But evidently the sound of it pleased Gatsby, for Tom remained

“the polo player.” for the rest of the evening.

“I’ve never met so many celebrities!” Daisy exclaimed. “I

liked that man — what was his name?— with the sort of blue

nose.”

Gatsby identified him, adding that he was a small producer.

“Well, I liked him anyhow.”

“I’d a little rather not be the polo player,” said Tom pleasantly,

“I’d rather look at all these famous people in — in

oblivion.”

Daisy and Gatsby danced. I remember being surprised by his

graceful, conservative fox-trot — I had never seen him dance

before. Then they sauntered over to my house and sat on the

steps for half an hour, while at her request I remained watchfully

in the garden. “In case there’s a fire or a flood,” she explained,

“or any act of God.”

Tom appeared from his oblivion as we were sitting down to

supper together. “Do you mind if I eat with some people over

here?” he said. “A fellow’s getting off some funny stuff.”

“Go ahead,” answered Daisy genially, “and if you want to

take down any addresses here’s my little gold pencil.” … she looked around after a moment and told me the girl was “common but pretty,” and I knew that except for the half-hour she’d been alone with Gatsby she wasn’t having a good time.

We were at a particularly tipsy table. That was my fault —

Gatsby had been called to the phone, and I’d enjoyed these

same people only two weeks before. But what had amused me

then turned septic on the air now.

“How do you feel, Miss Baedeker?”

The girl addressed was trying, unsuccessfully, to slump

against my shoulder. At this inquiry she sat up and opened her

eyes.

“Wha’?”

A massive and lethargic woman, who had been urging Daisy

to play golf with her at the local club to-morrow, spoke in Miss

Baedeker’s defence:

“Oh, she’s all right now. When she’s had five or six cocktails

she always starts screaming like that. I tell her she ought to

leave it alone.”

“I do leave it alone,” affirmed the accused hollowly.

“We heard you yelling, so I said to Doc Civet here: ‘There’s

somebody that needs your help, Doc.’”

“She’s much obliged, I’m sure,” said another friend, without

gratitude. “But you got her dress all wet when you stuck her

head in the pool.”

“Anything I hate is to get my head stuck in a pool,” mumbled

Miss Baedeker. “They almost drowned me once over in New

Jersey.”

“Then you ought to leave it alone,” countered Doctor Civet.

“Speak for yourself!” cried Miss Baedeker violently. “Your

hand shakes. I wouldn’t let you operate on me!”

It was like that. Almost the last thing I remember was standing

with Daisy and watching the moving-picture director and

his Star. They were still under the white plum tree and their

faces were touching except for a pale, thin ray of moonlight

between. It occurred to me that he had been very slowly bending

toward her all evening to attain this proximity, and even

while I watched I saw him stoop one ultimate degree and kiss

at her cheek.

“I like her,” said Daisy, “I think she’s lovely.”

But the rest offended her — and inarguably, because it

wasn’t a gesture but an emotion. She was appalled by West

Egg, this unprecedented “place.” that Broadway had begotten

upon a Long Island fishing village — appalled by its raw vigor

that chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive

fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing

to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she

failed to understand.

I sat on the front steps with them while they waited for their

car. It was dark here in front; only the bright door sent ten

square feet of light volleying out into the soft black morning.

Sometimes a shadow moved against a dressing-room blind

above, gave way to another shadow, an indefinite procession of

shadows, who rouged and powdered in an invisible glass.

“Who is this Gatsby anyhow?” demanded Tom suddenly.

“Some big bootlegger?”

“Where’d you hear that?” I inquired.

“I didn’t hear it. I imagined it. A lot of these newly rich

people are just big bootleggers, you know.”

“Not Gatsby,” I said shortly.

He was silent for a moment. The pebbles of the drive

crunched under his feet.

“Well, he certainly must have strained himself to get this menagerie

together.”

A breeze stirred the gray haze of Daisy’s fur collar.

“At least they’re more interesting than the people we know,”

she said with an effort.

“You didn’t look so interested.”

“Well, I was.”

Tom laughed and turned to me.

“Did you notice Daisy’s face when that girl asked her to put

her under a cold shower?”

Daisy began to sing with the music in a husky, rhythmic

whisper, bringing out a meaning in each word that it had never

had before and would never have again. When the melody rose,

her voice broke up sweetly, following it, in a way contralto

voices have, and each change tipped out a little of her warm

human magic upon the air.

“Lots of people come who haven’t been invited,” she said

suddenly. “That girl hadn’t been invited. They simply force

their way in and he’s too polite to object.”

“I’d like to know who he is and what he does,” insisted Tom.

“And I think I’ll make a point of finding out.”

“I can tell you right now,” she answered. “He owned some

drug-stores, a lot of drug-stores. He built them up himself.”

The dilatory limousine came rolling up the drive.

“Good night, Nick,” said Daisy.

Her glance left me and sought the lighted top of the steps,

where THREE O’CLOCK IN THE MORNING, a neat, sad little

waltz of that year, was drifting out the open door. After all, in

the very casualness of Gatsby’s party there were romantic possibilities

totally absent from her world. What was it up there in

the song that seemed to be calling her back inside? What

would happen now in the dim, incalculable hours? Perhaps

some unbelievable guest would arrive, a person infinitely rare

and to be marvelled at, some authentically radiant young girl

who with one fresh glance at Gatsby, one moment of magical

encounter, would blot out those five years of unwavering

devotion.

I stayed late that night, Gatsby asked me to wait until he was

free, and I lingered in the garden until the inevitable swimming

party had run up, chilled and exalted, from the black beach,

until the lights were extinguished in the guest-rooms overhead.

When he came down the steps at last the tanned skin was

drawn unusually tight on his face, and his eyes were bright and

tired.

“She didn’t like it,” he said immediately.

“Of course she did.”

“She didn’t like it,” he insisted. “She didn’t have a good

time.”

He was silent, and I guessed at his unutterable depression.

“I feel far away from her,” he said. “It’s hard to make her

understand.”

“You mean about the dance?”

“The dance?” He dismissed all the dances he had given with

a snap of his fingers. “Old sport, the dance is unimportant.”

He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to

Tom and say: “I never loved you.” After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house — just as if it were five years ago.

“And she doesn’t understand,” he said. “She used to be able

to understand. We’d sit for hours ——”

He broke off and began to walk up and down a desolate path

of fruit rinds and discarded favors and crushed flowers.

“I wouldn’t ask too much of her,” I ventured. “You can’t repeat

the past.”

“Can’t repeat the past?” he cried incredulously. “Why of

course you can!”

He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here

in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.

“I’m going to fix everything just the way it was before,” he

said, nodding determinedly. “She’ll see.”

He talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted

to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had

gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered

since then, but if he could once return to a certain

starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what

that thing was… .

… One autumn night, five years before, they had been walking

down the street when the leaves were falling, and they

came to a place where there were no trees and the sidewalk

was white with moonlight. They stopped here and turned toward

each other. Now it was a cool night with that mysterious

excitement in it which comes at the two changes of the year.

The quiet lights in the houses were humming out into the darkness

and there was a stir and bustle among the stars. Out of

the corner of his eye Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalks

really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place

above the trees — he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and

once there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable

milk of wonder.

His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy’s white face came

up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and

forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath,

his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he

waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips’ touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete.

Through all he said, even through his appalling sentimentality,

I was reminded of something — an elusive rhythm, a fragment

of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time

ago. For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth

and my lips parted like a dumb man’s, as though there was

more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air. But they

made no sound, and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable

forever.

Chapter 7

**I**t 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 Wolfsheim wanted to do something for.

They’re all brothers and sisters. They used to run a small

hotel.”

“I see.”

He was calling up at Daisy’s request — would I come to lunch

at her house to-morrow? Miss Baker would be there. Half an

hour later Daisy herself telephoned and seemed relieved to

find that I was coming. Something was up. And yet I couldn’t

believe that they would choose this occasion for a scene — especially

for the rather harrowing scene that Gatsby had outlined

in the garden.

The next day was broiling, almost the last, certainly the

warmest, of the summer. As my train emerged from the tunnel

into sunlight, only the hot whistles of the National Biscuit Company

broke the simmering hush at noon. The straw seats of the

car hovered on the edge of combustion; the woman next to me

perspired delicately for a while into her white shirtwaist, and

then, as her newspaper dampened under her fingers, lapsed

despairingly into deep heat with a desolate cry. Her 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 every one near

by, including the woman, suspected me just the same.

“Hot!” said the conductor to familiar faces. “Some weather!

hot! hot! hot! Is it hot enough for you? Is it hot? Is it … ?”

My commutation ticket came back to me with a dark stain

from his hand. That any one should care in this heat whose

flushed lips he kissed, whose head made damp the pajama

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 rumor is,” whispered Jordan, “that that’s Tom’s girl on

the telephone.”

We were silent. The voice in the hall rose high with annoyance:

“Very well, then, I won’t sell you the car at all… . I’m under

no obligations to you at all … and as for your bothering me

about it at lunch time, I won’t stand that at all!”

“Holding down the receiver,” said Daisy cynically.

“No, he’s not,” I assured her. “It’s a bona-fide deal. I happen

to know about it.”

Tom flung open the door, blocked out its space for a moment

with his thick body, and hurried into the room.

“Mr. Gatsby!” He put out his broad, flat hand with well-concealed

dislike. “I’m glad to see you, sir… . Nick… .”

“Make us a cold drink,” cried Daisy.

As he left the room again she got up and went over to Gatsby

and pulled his face down, kissing him on the mouth.

“You know I love you,” she murmured.

“You forget there’s a lady present,” said Jordan.

Daisy looked around doubtfully.

“You kiss Nick too.”

“What a low, vulgar girl!”

“I don’t care!” cried Daisy, and began to clog on the brick

fireplace. Then she remembered the heat and sat down guiltily on the couch just as a freshly laundered nurse leading a little girl came into the room.

“Bles-sed pre-cious,” she crooned, holding out her arms.

“Come to your own mother that loves you.”

The child, relinquished by the nurse, rushed across the room

and rooted shyly into her mother’s dress.

“The bles-sed pre-cious! Did mother get powder on your old

yellowy hair? Stand up now, and say — How-de-do.”

Gatsby and I in turn leaned down and took the small, reluctant

hand. Afterward he kept looking at the child with surprise.

I don’t think he had ever really believed in its existence before.

“I got dressed before luncheon,” said the child, turning

eagerly to Daisy.

“That’s because your mother wanted to show you off.” Her

face bent into the single wrinkle of the small, white neck. “You

dream, you. You absolute little dream.”

“Yes,” admitted the child calmly. “Aunt Jordan’s got on a

white dress too.”

“How do you like mother’s friends?” Daisy turned her around

so that she faced Gatsby. “Do you think they’re pretty?”

“Where’s Daddy?”

“She doesn’t look like her father,” explained Daisy. “She

looks like me. She’s got my hair and shape of the face.”

Daisy sat back upon the couch. The nurse took a step forward

and held out her hand.

“Come, Pammy.”

“Good-by, 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 along-shore. 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 gayety 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,

molding 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 some one he knew a long time ago.

“You resemble the advertisement of the man,” she went on

innocently. “You know the advertisement of the man ——”

“All right,” broke in Tom quickly, “I’m perfectly willing to go

to town. Come on — we’re all going to town.”

He got up, his eyes still flashing between Gatsby and his

wife. No one moved.

“Come on!” His temper cracked a little. “What’s the matter,

anyhow? If we’re going to town, let’s start.”

His hand, trembling with his effort at self-control, bore to his

lips the last of his glass of ale. Daisy’s voice got us to our feet

and out on to the blazing gravel drive.

“Are we just going to go?” she objected. “Like this? Aren’t we

going to let any one smoke a cigarette first?”

“Everybody smoked all through lunch.”

“Oh, let’s have fun,” she begged him. “It’s too hot to fuss.”

He didn’t answer.

“Have it your own way,” she said. “Come on, Jordan.”

They went up-stairs to get ready while we three men stood

there shuffling the hot pebbles with our feet. A silver curve of

the moon hovered already in the western sky. Gatsby started to

speak, changed his mind, but not before Tom wheeled and

faced him expectantly.

“Have you got your stables here?” asked Gatsby with an

effort.

“About a quarter of a mile down the road.”

“Oh.”

A pause.

“I don’t see the idea of going to town,” broke out Tom savagely.

“Women get these notions in their heads ——”

“Shall we take anything to drink?” called Daisy from an upper

window.

“I’ll get some whiskey,” answered Tom. He went inside.

Gatsby turned to me rigidly:

“I can’t say anything in his house, old sport.”

“She’s got an indiscreet voice,” I remarked. “It’s full of ——”

I hesitated.

“Her voice is full of money,” he said suddenly.

That was it. I’d never understood before. It was full of money

— that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the

jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it… . high in a white palace the

king’s daughter, the golden girl… .

Tom came out of the house wrapping a quart bottle in a towel,

followed by Daisy and Jordan wearing small tight hats of

metallic cloth and carrying light capes over their arms.

“Shall we all go in my car?” suggested Gatsby. He felt the

hot, green leather of the seat. “I ought to have left it in the

shade.”

“Is it standard shift?” demanded Tom.

“Yes.”

“Well, you take my coupe and let me drive your car to town.”

The suggestion was distasteful to Gatsby.

“I don’t think there’s much gas,” he objected.

“Plenty of gas,” said Tom boisterously. He looked at the

gauge. “And if it runs out I can stop at a drug-store. You can

buy anything at a drug-store nowadays.”

A pause followed this apparently pointless remark. Daisy

looked at Tom frowning, and an indefinable expression, at once

definitely unfamiliar and vaguely recognizable, as if I had only

heard it described in words, passed over Gatsby’s face.

“Come on, Daisy,” said Tom, pressing her with his hand toward

Gatsby’s car. “I’ll take you in this circus wagon.”

He opened the door, but she moved out from the circle of his

arm.

“You take Nick and Jordan. We’ll follow you in the coupe.”

She walked close to Gatsby, touching his coat with her hand.

Jordan and Tom and I got into the front seat of Gatsby’s car,

Tom pushed the unfamiliar gears tentatively, and we shot off

into the oppressive heat, leaving them out of sight behind.

“Did you see that?” demanded Tom.

“See what?”

He looked at me keenly, realizing that Jordan and I must

have known all along.

“You think I’m pretty dumb, don’t you?” he suggested. “Perhaps

I am, but I have a — almost a second sight, sometimes,

that tells me what to do. Maybe you don’t believe that, but

science ——”

He paused. The immediate contingency overtook him, pulled

him back from the edge of the theoretical abyss.

“I’ve made a small investigation of this fellow,” he continued.

“I could have gone deeper if I’d known ——”

“Do you mean you’ve been to a medium?” inquired Jordan

humorously.

“What?” Confused, he stared at us as we laughed. “A

medium?”

“About Gatsby.”

“About Gatsby! No, I haven’t. I said I’d been making a small

investigation of his past.”

“And you found he was an Oxford man,” said Jordan

helpfully.

“An Oxford man!” He was incredulous. “Like hell he is! He

wears a pink suit.”

“Nevertheless he’s an Oxford man.”

“Oxford, New Mexico,” snorted Tom contemptuously, “or

something like that.”

“Listen, Tom. If you’re such a snob, why did you invite him to

lunch?” demanded Jordan crossly.

“Daisy invited him; she knew him before we were married —

God knows where!”

We were all irritable now with the fading ale, and aware of it

we drove for a while in silence. Then as Doctor T. J. Eckleburg’s

faded eyes came into sight down the road, I remembered

Gatsby’s caution about gasoline.

“We’ve got enough to get us to town,” said Tom.

“But there’s a garage right here,” objected Jordan. “I don’t

want to get stalled in this baking heat.” Tom threw on both

brakes impatiently, and we slid to an abrupt dusty stop under

Wilson’s sign. After a moment the proprietor emerged from the

interior of his establishment and gazed hollow-eyed at the car.

“Let’s have some gas!” cried Tom roughly. “What do you

think we stopped for — to admire the view?”

“I’m sick,” said Wilson without moving. “Been sick all day.”

“What’s the matter?”

“I’m all run down.”

“Well, shall I help myself?” Tom demanded. “You sounded

well enough on the phone.”

With an effort Wilson left the shade and support of the doorway

and, breathing hard, unscrewed the cap of the tank. In the

sunlight his face was green.

“I didn’t mean to interrupt your lunch,” he said. “But I need

money pretty bad, and I was wondering what you were going

to do with your old car.”

“How do you like this one?” inquired Tom. “I bought it last

week.”

“It’s a nice yellow one,” said Wilson, as he strained at the

handle.

“Like to buy it?”

“Big chance,” Wilson smiled faintly. “No, but I could make

some money on the other.”

“What do you want money for, all of a sudden?”

“I’ve been here too long. I want to get away. My wife and I

want to go West.”

“Your wife does,” exclaimed Tom, startled.

“She’s been talking about it for ten years.” He rested for a

moment against the pump, shading his eyes. “And now she’s

going whether she wants to or not. I’m going to get her away.”

The coupe 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 to-morrow

afternoon.”

That locality was always vaguely disquieting, even in the

broad glare of afternoon, and now I turned my head as though

I had been warned of something behind. Over the ashheaps the

giant eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg kept their vigil, but I perceived,

after a moment, that other eyes were regarding us with

peculiar intensity from less than twenty feet away.

In one of the windows over the garage the curtains had been

moved aside a little, and Myrtle Wilson was peering down at

the car. So engrossed was she that she had no consciousness

of being observed, and one emotion after another crept into

her face like objects into a slowly developing picture. Her expression

was curiously familiar — it was an expression I had often

seen on women’s faces, but on Myrtle Wilson’s face it

seemed purposeless and inexplicable until I realized that her

eyes, wide with jealous terror, were fixed not on Tom, but on

Jordan Baker, whom she took to be his wife.

There is no confusion like the confusion of a simple mind,

and as we drove away Tom was feeling the hot whips of panic.

His wife and his mistress, until an hour ago secure and inviolate,

were slipping precipitately from his control. Instinct made

him step on the accelerator with the double purpose of overtaking

Daisy and leaving Wilson behind, and we sped along toward

Astoria at fifty miles an hour, until, among the spidery

girders of the elevated, we came in sight of the easy-going blue

coupe.

“Those big movies around Fiftieth Street are cool,” suggested

Jordan. “I love New York on summer afternoons when

every one’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 coupe came to a

stop, and Daisy signaled 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 parlor 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 bath-rooms and take cold

baths, and then assumed more tangible form as “a place to

have a mint julep.” Each of us said over and over that it was a

“crazy idea.”— we all talked at once to a baffled clerk and

thought, or pretended to think, that we were being very

funny… .

The room was large and stifling, and, though it was already

four o’clock, opening the windows admitted Only a gust of hot

shrubbery from the Park. Daisy went to the mirror and stood

with her back to us, fixing her hair.

“It’s a swell suite,” whispered Jordan respectfully, and every

one laughed.

“Open another window,” commanded Daisy, without turning

around.

“There aren’t any more.”

“Well, we’d better telephone for an axe ——”

“The thing to do is to forget about the heat,” said Tom impatiently.

“You make it ten times worse by crabbing about it.”

He unrolled the bottle of whiskey from the towel and put it

on the table.

“Why not let her alone, old sport?” remarked Gatsby. “You’re

the one that wanted to come to town.”

There was a moment of silence. The telephone book slipped

from its nail and splashed to the floor, whereupon Jordan

whispered, “Excuse me.”— but this time no one laughed.

“I’ll pick it up,” I offered.

“I’ve got it.” Gatsby examined the parted string, muttered

“Hum!” in an interested way, and tossed the book on a chair.

“That’s a great expression of yours, isn’t it?” said Tom

sharply.

“What is?”

“All this ‘old sport’ business. Where’d you pick that up?”

“Now see here, Tom,” said Daisy, turning around from the

mirror, “if you’re going to make personal remarks I won’t stay

here a minute. Call up and order some ice for the mint julep.”

As Tom took up the receiver the compressed heat exploded

into sound and we were listening to the portentous chords of

Mendelssohn’s Wedding March from the ballroom below.

“Imagine marrying anybody in this heat!” cried Jordan

dismally.

“Still — I was married in the middle of June,” Daisy remembered,

“Louisville in June! Somebody fainted. Who was it

fainted, Tom?”

“Biloxi,” he answered shortly.

“A man named Biloxi. ‘blocks’ Biloxi, and he made boxes —

that’s a fact — and he was from Biloxi, Tennessee.”

“They carried him into my house,” appended Jordan, “because

we lived just two doors from the church. And he stayed

three weeks, until Daddy told him he had to get out. The day

after he left Daddy died.” After a moment she added as if she

might have sounded irreverent, “There wasn’t any connection.”

“I used to know a Bill Biloxi from Memphis,” I remarked.

“That was his cousin. I knew his whole family history before

he left. He gave me an aluminum putter that I use to-day.”

The music had died down as the ceremony began and now a

long cheer floated in at the window, followed by intermittent

cries of “Yea-ea-ea!” and finally by a burst of jazz as the dancing

began.

“We’re getting old,” said Daisy. “If we were young we’d rise

and dance.”

“Remember Biloxi,” Jordan warned her. “Where’d you know

him, Tom?”

“Biloxi?” He concentrated with an effort. “I didn’t know him.

He was a friend of Daisy’s.”

“He was not,” she denied. “I’d never seen him before. He

came down in the private car.”

“Well, he said he knew you. He said he was raised in Louisville.

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 whiskey, Tom,” she ordered, “and I’ll make you a

mint julep. Then you won’t seem so stupid to yourself… . Look

at the mint!”

“Wait a minute,” snapped Tom, “I want to ask Mr. Gatsby

one more question.”

“Go on,” Gatsby said politely.

“What kind of a row are you trying to cause in my house

anyhow?”

They were out in the open at last and Gatsby was content.

“He isn’t causing a row.” Daisy looked desperately from one

to the other. “You’re causing a row. Please have a little selfcontrol.”

“Self-control!” Repeated Tom incredulously. “I suppose the

latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere

make love to your wife. Well, if that’s the idea you can count

me out… . Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life

and family institutions, and next they’ll throw everything overboard

and have intermarriage between black and white.”

Flushed with his impassioned gibberish, he saw himself

standing alone on the last barrier of civilization.

“We’re all white here,” murmured Jordan.

“I know I’m not very popular. I don’t give big parties. I suppose

you’ve got to make your house into a pigsty in order to

have any friends — in the modern world.”

Angry as I was, as we all were, I was tempted to laugh

whenever he opened his mouth. The transition from libertine to

prig was so complete.

“I’ve got something to tell YOU, old sport ——” began

Gatsby. But Daisy guessed at his intention.

“Please don’t!” she interrupted helplessly. “Please let’s all go

home. Why don’t we all go home?”

“That’s a good idea.” I got up. “Come on, Tom. Nobody wants

a drink.”

“I want to know what Mr. Gatsby has to tell me.”

“Your wife doesn’t love you,” said Gatsby. “She’s never loved

you. She loves me.”

“You must be crazy!” exclaimed Tom automatically.

Gatsby sprang to his feet, vivid with excitement.

“She never loved you, do you hear?” he cried. “She only married

you because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for

me. It was a terrible mistake, but in her heart she never loved

any one except me!”

At this point Jordan and I tried to go, but Tom and Gatsby insisted

with competitive firmness that we remain — as though

neither of them had anything to conceal and it would be a privilege

to partake vicariously of their emotions.

“Sit down, Daisy,” Tom’s voice groped unsuccessfully for the

paternal note. “What’s been going on? I want to hear all about

it.”

“I told you what’s been going on,” said Gatsby. “Going on for

five years — and you didn’t know.”

Tom turned to Daisy sharply.

“You’ve been seeing this fellow for five years?”

“Not seeing,” said Gatsby. “No, we couldn’t meet. But both of

us loved each other all that time, old sport, and you didn’t

know. I used to laugh sometimes.”— but there was no laughter

in his eyes ——” to think that you didn’t know.”

“Oh — that’s all.” Tom tapped his thick fingers together like

a clergyman and leaned back in his chair.

“You’re crazy!” he exploded. “I can’t speak about what

happened five years ago, because I didn’t know Daisy then —

and I’ll be damned if I see how you got within a mile of her unless

you brought the groceries to the back door. But all the rest

of that’s a God damned lie. Daisy loved me when she married

me and she loves me now.”

“No,” said Gatsby, shaking his head.

“She does, though. The trouble is that sometimes she gets

foolish ideas in her head and doesn’t know what she’s doing.”

He nodded sagely. “And what’s more, I love Daisy too. Once in

a while I go off on a spree and make a fool of myself, but I always

come back, and in my heart I love her all the time.”

“You’re revolting,” said Daisy. She turned to me, and her

voice, dropping an octave lower, filled the room with thrilling

scorn: “Do you know why we left Chicago? I’m surprised that

they didn’t treat you to the story of that little spree.”

Gatsby walked over and stood beside her.

“Daisy, that’s all over now,” he said earnestly. “It doesn’t

matter any more. Just tell him the truth — that you never loved

him — and it’s all wiped out forever.”

She looked at him blindly. “Why — how could I love him —

possibly?”

“You never loved him.”

She hesitated. Her eyes fell on Jordan and me with a sort of

appeal, as though she realized at last what she was doing —

and as though she had never, all along, intended doing anything

at all. But it was done now. It was too late.

“I never loved him,” she said, with perceptible reluctance.

“Not at Kapiolani?” demanded Tom suddenly.

“No.”

From the ballroom beneath, muffled and suffocating chords

were drifting up on hot waves of air.

“Not that day I carried you down from the Punch Bowl to

keep your shoes dry?” There was a husky tenderness in his

tone… . “Daisy?”

“Please don’t.” Her voice was cold, but the rancor was gone

from it. She looked at Gatsby. “There, Jay,” she said — but her

hand as she tried to light a cigarette was trembling. Suddenly

she threw the cigarette and the burning match on the carpet.

“Oh, you want too much!” she cried to Gatsby. “I love you

now — isn’t that enough? I can’t help what’s past.” She began

to sob helplessly. “I did love him once — but I loved you too.”

Gatsby’s eyes opened and closed.

“You loved me TOO?” he repeated.

“Even that’s a lie,” said Tom savagely. “She didn’t know you

were alive. Why — there’re things between Daisy and me that

you’ll never know, things that neither of us can ever forget.”

The words seemed to bite physically into Gatsby.

“I want to speak to Daisy alone,” he insisted. “She’s all excited

now ——”

“Even alone I can’t say I never loved Tom,” she admitted in a

pitiful voice. “It wouldn’t be true.”

“Of course it wouldn’t,” agreed Tom.

She turned to her husband.

“As if it mattered to you,” she said.

“Of course it matters. I’m going to take better care of you

from now on.”

“You don’t understand,” said Gatsby, with a touch of panic.

“You’re not going to take care of her any more.”

“I’m not?” Tom opened his eyes wide and laughed. He could

afford to control himself now. “Why’s that?”

“Daisy’s leaving you.”

“Nonsense.”

“I am, though,” she said with a visible effort.

“She’s not leaving me!” Tom’s words suddenly leaned down

over Gatsby. “Certainly not for a common swindler who’d have

to steal the ring he put on her finger.”

“I won’t stand this!” cried Daisy. “Oh, please let’s get out.”

“Who are you, anyhow?” broke out Tom. “You’re one of that

bunch that hangs around with Meyer Wolfsheim — 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 ‘drug-stores’ were.” He turned to us

and spoke rapidly. “He and this Wolfsheim bought up a lot of

side-street drug-stores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol

over the counter. That’s one of his little stunts. I picked

him for a bootlegger the first time I saw him, and I wasn’t far

wrong.”

“What about it?” said Gatsby politely. “I guess your friend

Walter Chase wasn’t too proud to come in on it.”

“And you left him in the lurch, didn’t you? You let him go to

jail for a month over in New Jersey. God! You ought to hear

Walter on the subject of YOU.”

“He came to us dead broke. He was very glad to pick up

some money, old sport.”

“Don’t you call me ‘old sport’!” cried Tom. Gatsby said nothing.

“Walter could have you up on the betting laws too, but

Wolfsheim scared him into shutting his mouth.”

That unfamiliar yet recognizable look was back again in

Gatsby’s face.

“That drug-store business was just small change,” continued

Tom slowly, “but you’ve got something on now that Walter’s

afraid to tell me about.”

I glanced at Daisy, who was staring terrified between Gatsby

and her husband, and at Jordan, who had begun to balance an

invisible but absorbing object on the tip of her chin. Then I

turned back to Gatsby — and was startled at his expression. He

looked — and this is said in all contempt for the babbled

slander of his garden — as if he had “killed a man.” For a moment

the set of his face could be described in just that fantastic

way.

It passed, and he began to talk excitedly to Daisy, denying

everything, defending his name against accusations that had

not been made. But with every word she was drawing further

and further into herself, so he gave that up, and only the dead

dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch

what was no longer tangible, struggling unhappily, undespairingly,

toward that lost voice across the room.

The voice begged again to go.

“PLEASE, Tom! I can’t stand this any more.”

Her frightened eyes told that whatever intentions, whatever

courage, she had had, were definitely gone.

“You two start on home, Daisy,” said Tom. “In Mr. Gatsby’s

car.”

She looked at Tom, alarmed now, but he insisted with magnanimous

scorn.

“Go on. He won’t annoy you. I think he realizes that his presumptuous

little flirtation is over.”

They were gone, without a word, snapped out, made accidental,

isolated, like ghosts, even from our pity.

After a moment Tom got up and began wrapping the unopened

bottle of whiskey in the towel.

“Want any of this stuff? Jordan? … Nick?”

I didn’t answer.

“Nick?” He asked again.

“What?”

“Want any?”

“No … I just remembered that to-day’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 coupe with him

and started for Long Island. Tom talked incessantly, exulting

and laughing, but his voice was as remote from Jordan and me

as the foreign clamor on the sidewalk or the tumult of the elevated

overhead. Human sympathy has its limits, and we were

content to let all their tragic arguments fade with the city

lights behind. Thirty — the promise of a decade of loneliness, a

thinning list of single men to know, a thinning brief-case of enthusiasm,

thinning hair. But there was Jordan beside me, who,

unlike Daisy, was too wise ever to carry well-forgotten dreams

from age to age. As we passed over the dark bridge her wan

face fell lazily against my coat’s shoulder and the formidable

stroke of thirty died away with the reassuring pressure of her

hand.

So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight.

The young Greek, Michaelis, who ran the coffee joint beside

the ashheaps was the principal witness at the inquest. He had

slept through the heat until after five, when he strolled over tothe garage, and found George Wilson sick in his office — really sick, pale as his own pale hair and shaking all over.

Michaelis advised him to go to bed, but Wilson refused, saying that he’d

miss a lot of business if he did. While his neighbor was trying to persuade him a violent racket broke out overhead.

“I’ve got my wife locked in up there,” explained Wilson

calmly. “She’s going to stay there till the day after to-morrow,

and then we’re going to move away.”

Michaelis was astonished; they had been neighbors 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

any one spoke to him he invariably laughed in an agreeable,

colorless way. He was his wife’s man and not his own.

So naturally Michaelis tried to find out what had happened,

but Wilson wouldn’t say a word — instead he began to throw

curious, suspicious glances at his visitor and ask him what he’d

been doing at certain times on certain days. Just as the latter

was getting uneasy, some workmen came past the door bound

for his restaurant, and Michaelis took the opportunity to get

away, intending to come back later. But he didn’t. He supposed

he forgot to, that’s all. When he came outside again, a little

after seven, he was reminded of the conversation because he

heard Mrs. Wilson’s voice, loud and scolding, down-stairs in

the garage.

“Beat me!” he heard her cry. “Throw me down and beat me,

you dirty little coward!”

A moment later she rushed out into the dusk, waving her

hands and shouting — before he could move from his door the

business was over.

The “death car.” as the newspapers called it, didn’t stop; it

came out of the gathering darkness, wavered tragically for a

moment, and then disappeared around the next bend. Michaelis

wasn’t even sure of its color — he told the first policeman

that it was light green. The other car, the one going toward

New York, came to rest a hundred yards beyond, and its driver

hurried back to where Myrtle Wilson, her life violently extinguished,

knelt in the road and mingled her thick dark blood

with the dust.

Michaelis and this man reached her first, but when they had

torn open her shirtwaist, still damp with perspiration, they saw

that her left breast was swinging loose like a flap, and there

was no need to listen for the heart beneath. The mouth was

wide open and ripped 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 coupe and walked toward the door resolved itself into the

words “Oh, my God!” uttered over and over in a gasping moan.

“There’s some bad trouble here,” said Tom excitedly.

He reached up on tiptoes and peered over a circle of heads

into the garage, which was lit only by a yellow light in a

swinging wire basket overhead. Then he made a harsh sound

in his throat, and with a violent thrusting movement of his

powerful arms pushed his way through.

The circle closed up again with a running murmur of expostulation;

it was a minute before I could see anything at all.

Then new arrivals 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 work-table 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-y-.” 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 half way and fell to his side ——” she ran

out there an’ the one comin’ from N’york knock right into her,

goin’ thirty or forty miles an hour.”

“What’s the name of this place here?” demanded the officer.

“Hasn’t got any name.”

A pale well-dressed negro stepped near.

“It was a yellow car,” he said, “big yellow car. New.”

“See the accident?” asked the policeman.

“No, but the car passed me down the road, going faster’n

forty. Going fifty, sixty.”

“Come here and let’s have your name. Look out now. I want

to get his name.”

Some words of this conversation must have reached Wilson,

swaying in the office door, for suddenly a new theme found

voice among his gasping cries:

“You don’t have to tell me what kind of car it was! I know

what kind of car it was!”

Watching Tom, I saw the wad of muscle back of his shoulder

tighten under his coat. He walked quickly over to Wilson and,

standing in front of him, seized him firmly by the upper arms.

“You’ve got to pull yourself together,” he said with soothing

gruffness.

Wilson’s eyes fell upon Tom; he started up on his tiptoes and

then would have collapsed to his knees had not Tom held him

upright.

“Listen,” said Tom, shaking him a little. “I just got here a

minute ago, from New York. I was bringing you that coupe

we’ve been talking about. That yellow car I was driving this afternoon

wasn’t mine — do you hear? I haven’t seen it all

afternoon.”

Only the negro and I were near enough to hear what he said,

but the policeman caught something in the tone and looked

over with truculent eyes.

“What’s all that?” he demanded.

“I’m a friend of his.” Tom turned his head but kept his hands

firm on Wilson’s body. “He says he knows the car that did it …

it was a yellow car.”

Some dim impulse moved the policeman to look suspiciously

at Tom.

“And what color’s your car?”

“It’s a blue car, a coupe.”

“We’ve come straight from New York,” I said.

Some one 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 coupe 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 to-night.”

A change had come over him, and he spoke gravely, and with

decision. As we walked across the moonlight gravel to the

porch he disposed of the situation in a few brisk phrases.

“I’ll telephone for a taxi to take you home, and while you’re

waiting you and Jordan better go in the kitchen and have them

get you some supper — if you want any.” He opened the door.

“Come in.”

“No, thanks. But I’d be glad if you’d order me the taxi. I’ll

wait outside.”

Jordan put her hand on my arm.

“Won’t you come in, Nick?”

“No, thanks.”

I was feeling a little sick and I wanted to be alone. But Jordan

lingered for a moment more.

“It’s only half-past nine,” she said.

I’d be damned if I’d go in; I’d had enough of all of them for

one day, and suddenly that included Jordan too. She must have

seen something of this in my expression, for she turned abruptly

away and ran up the porch steps into the house. I sat

down for a few minutes with my head in my hands, until I

heard the phone taken up inside and the butler’s voice calling

a taxi. Then I walked slowly down the drive away from the

house, intending to wait by the gate.

I hadn’t gone twenty yards when I heard my name and

Gatsby stepped from between two bushes into the path. I must

have felt pretty weird by that time, because I could think of

nothing except the luminosity of his pink suit under the moon.

“What are you doing?” I inquired.

“Just standing here, old sport.”

Somehow, that seemed a despicable occupation. For all I

knew he was going to rob the house in a moment; I wouldn’t

have been surprised to see sinister faces, the faces of ‘Wolfsheim’s

people,’ behind him in the dark shrubbery.

“Did you see any trouble on the road?” he asked after a

minute.

“Yes.”

He hesitated.

“Was she killed?”

“Yes.”

“I thought so; I told Daisy I thought so. It’s better that the

shock should all come at once. She stood it pretty well.”

He spoke as if Daisy’s reaction was the only thing that

mattered.

“I got to West Egg by a side road,” he went on, “and left the

car in my garage. I don’t think anybody saw us, but of course I

can’t be sure.”

I disliked him so much by this time that I didn’t find it necessary

to tell him he was wrong.

“Who was the woman?” he inquired.

“Her name was Wilson. Her husband owns the garage. How

the devil did it happen?”

“Well, I tried to swing the wheel ——” He broke off, and suddenly

I guessed at the truth.

“Was Daisy driving?”

“Yes,” he said after a moment, “but of course I’ll say I was.

You see, when we left New York she was very nervous and she

thought it would steady her to drive — and this woman rushed

out at us just as we were passing a car coming the other way.

It all happened in a minute, but it seemed to me that she

wanted to speak to us, thought we were somebody she knew.

Well, first Daisy turned away from the woman toward the other

car, and then she lost her nerve and turned back. The second

my hand reached the wheel I felt the shock — it must have

killed her instantly.”

“It ripped her open ——”

“Don’t tell me, old sport.” He winced. “Anyhow — Daisy

stepped on it. I tried to make her stop, but she couldn’t, so I

pulled on the emergency brake. Then she fell over into my lap

and I drove on.

“She’ll be all right to-morrow,” he said presently. “I’m just

going to wait here and see if he tries to bother her about that

unpleasantness this afternoon. She’s locked herself into her

room, and if he tries any brutality she’s going to turn the light

out and on again.”

“He won’t touch her,’ I said. “He’s not thinking about her.”

“I don’t trust him, old sport.”

“How long are you going to wait?”

“All night, if necessary. Anyhow, till they all go to bed.”

A new point of view occurred to me. Suppose Tom found out

that Daisy had been driving. He might think he saw a connection

in it — he might think anything. I looked at the house;

there were two or three bright windows down-stairs and the

pink glow from Daisy’s room on the second floor.

“You wait here,” I said. “I’ll see if there’s any sign of a

commotion.”

I walked back along the border of the lawn, traversed the

gravel softly, and tiptoed up the veranda steps. The drawingroom

curtains were open, and I saw that the room was empty.

Crossing the porch where we had dined that June night three

months before, I came to a small rectangle of light which I

guessed was the pantry window. The blind was drawn, but I

found a rift at the sill.

Daisy and Tom were sitting opposite each other at the kitchen

table, with a plate of cold fried chicken between them,

and two bottles of ale. He was talking intently across the table

at her, and in his earnestness his hand had fallen upon and

covered her own. Once in a while she looked up at him and

nodded in agreement.

They weren’t happy, and neither of them had touched the

chicken or the ale — and yet they weren’t unhappy either.

There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the

picture, and anybody would have said that they were conspiring

together.

As I tiptoed from the porch I heard my taxi feeling its way

along the dark road toward the house. Gatsby was waiting

where I had left him in the drive.

“Is it all quiet up there?” he asked anxiously.

“Yes, it’s all quiet.” I hesitated. “You’d better come home and

get some sleep.”

He shook his head.

“I want to wait here till Daisy goes to bed. Good night, old

sport.”

He put his hands in his coat pockets and turned back eagerly

to his scrutiny of the house, as though my presence marred the

sacredness of the vigil. So I walked away and left him standing

there in the moonlight — watching over nothing.

Chapter 8

**I**couldn’t sleep all night; a fog-horn was groaning incessantly

on the Sound, and I tossed half-sick between grotesque

reality and savage, frightening dreams. Toward dawn I

heard a taxi go up Gatsby’s drive, and immediately I jumped

out of bed and began to dress — I felt that I had something to

tell him, something to warn him about, and morning would be

too late.

Crossing his lawn, I saw that his front door was still open

and he was leaning against a table in the hall, heavy with dejection

or sleep.

“Nothing happened,” he said wanly. “I waited, and about

four o’clock she came to the window and stood there for a

minute and then turned out the light.”

His house had never seemed so enormous to me as it did that

night when we hunted through the great rooms for cigarettes.

We pushed aside curtains that were like pavilions, and felt over

innumerable feet of dark wall for electric light switches — once

I tumbled with a sort of splash upon the keys of a ghostly piano.

There was an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere,

and the rooms were musty, as though they hadn’t been aired

for many days. I found the 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 up-stairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms,

of gay and radiant activities taking place through its

corridors, and of romances that were not musty and laid away

already in lavender but fresh and breathing and redolent of

this year’s shining motor-cars and of dances whose flowers

were scarcely withered. It excited him, too, that many men had

already loved Daisy — it increased her value in his eyes. He felt

their presence all about the house, pervading the air with the

shades and echoes of still vibrant emotions.

But he knew that he was in Daisy’s house by a colossal accident.

However glorious might be his future as Jay Gatsby, he

was at present a penniless young man without a past, and at

any moment the invisible cloak of his uniform might slip from

his shoulders. So he made the most of his time. He took what

he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously — eventually he

took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no

real right to touch her hand.

He might have despised himself, for he had certainly taken

her under false pretenses. I don’t mean that he had traded on

his phantom millions, but he had deliberately given Daisy a

sense of security; he let her believe that he was a person from

much the same stratum 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 machineguns.

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 gray 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 down-stairs, filling the house with

gray-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-ofthe-

way places to which they had driven in her white car. Just

as Daisy’s house had always seemed to him more mysterious

and gay than other houses, so his idea of the city itself, even

though she was gone from it, was pervaded with a melancholy

beauty.

He left feeling that if he had searched harder, he might have

found her — that he was leaving her behind. The day-coach —

he was penniless now — was hot. He went out to the open vestibule

and sat down on a folding-chair, and the station slid

away and the backs of unfamiliar buildings moved by. Then out

into the spring fields, where a yellow trolley raced them for a

minute with people in it who might once have seen the pale

magic of her face along the casual street.

The track curved and now it was going away from the sun,

which as it sank lower, seemed to spread itself in benediction

over the vanishing city where she had drawn her breath. He

stretched out his hand desperately as if to snatch only a wisp

of air, to save a fragment of the spot that she had made lovely

for him. But it was all going by too fast now for his blurred

eyes and he knew that he had lost that part of it, the freshest

and the best, forever.

It was nine o’clock when we finished breakfast and went out

on the porch. The night had made a sharp difference in the

weather and there was an autumn flavor in the air. The

gardener, the last one of Gatsby’s former servants, came to the

foot of the steps.

“I’m going to drain the pool to-day, Mr. Gatsby. Leaves’ll

start falling pretty soon, and then there’s always trouble with

the pipes.”

“Don’t do it to-day,” Gatsby answered. He turned to me apologetically.

“You know, old sport, I’ve never used that pool all

summer?”

I looked at my watch and stood up.

“Twelve minutes to my train.”

I didn’t want to go to the city. I wasn’t worth a decent stroke

of work, but it was more than that — I didn’t want to leave

Gatsby. I missed that train, and then another, before I could

get myself away.

“I’ll call you up,” I said finally.

“Do, old sport.”

“I’ll call you about noon.”

We walked slowly down the steps.

“I suppose Daisy’ll call too.” He looked at me anxiously, as if

he hoped I’d corroborate this.

“I suppose so.”

“Well, good-by.”

We shook hands and I started away. Just before I reached the

hedge I remembered something and turned around.

“They’re a rotten crowd,” I shouted across the lawn. “You’re

worth the whole damn bunch put together.”

I’ve always been glad I said that. It was the only compliment

I ever gave him, because I disapproved of him from beginning

to end. First he nodded politely, and then his face broke into

that radiant and understanding smile, as if we’d been in ecstatic

cahoots on that fact all the time. His gorgeous pink rag of a

suit made a bright spot of color against the white steps, and I

thought of the night when I first came to his ancestral home,

three months before. The lawn and drive had been crowded

with the faces of those who guessed at his corruption — and he

had stood on those steps, concealing his incorruptible dream,

as he waved them good-by.

I thanked him for his hospitality. We were always thanking

him for that — I and the others.

“Good-by,” 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 swivelchair.

Just before noon the phone woke me, and I started up

with sweat breaking out on my forehead. It was Jordan Baker;

she often called me up at this hour because the uncertainty of

her own movements between hotels and clubs and private

houses made her hard to find in any other way. Usually her

voice came over the wire as something fresh and cool, as if a

divot from a green golf-links had come sailing in at the office

window, but this morning it seemed harsh and dry.

“I’ve left Daisy’s house,” she said. “I’m at Hempstead, and

I’m going down to Southampton this afternoon.”

Probably it had been tactful to leave Daisy’s house, but the

act annoyed me, and her next remark made me rigid.

“You weren’t so nice to me last night.”

“How could it have mattered then?”

Silence for a moment. Then:

“However — I want to see you.”

“I want to see you, too.”

“Suppose I don’t go to Southampton, and come into town this

afternoon?”

“No — I don’t think this afternoon.”

“Very well.”

“It’s impossible this afternoon. Various ——”

We talked like that for a while, and then abruptly we weren’t

talking any longer. I don’t know which of us hung up with a

sharp click, but I know I didn’t care. I couldn’t have talked to

her across a tea-table that day if I never talked to her again in

this world.

I called Gatsby’s house a few minutes later, but the line was

busy. I tried four times; finally an exasperated central told me

the wire was being kept open for long distance from Detroit.

Taking out my time-table, I drew a small circle around the

three-fifty train. Then I leaned back in my chair and tried to

think. It was just noon.

When I passed the ashheaps on the train that morning I had

crossed deliberately to the other side of the car. I suppose

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. Some one, 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 every one 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, halfbewildered

look came back into his faded eyes.

“Look in the drawer there,” he said, pointing at the desk.

“Which drawer?”

“That drawer — that one.”

Michaelis opened the drawer nearest his hand. There was

nothing in it but a small, expensive dog-leash, made of leather

and braided silver. It was apparently new.

“This?” he inquired, holding it up.

Wilson stared and nodded.

“I found it yesterday afternoon. She tried to tell me about it,

but I knew it was something funny.”

“You mean your wife bought it?”

“She had it wrapped in tissue paper on her bureau.”

Michaelis didn’t see anything odd in that, and he gave Wilson

a dozen reasons why his wife might have bought the dog-leash.

But conceivably Wilson had heard some of these same explanations

before, from Myrtle, because he began saying “Oh, my

God!” again in a whisper — his comforter left several explanations

in the air.

“Then he killed her,” said Wilson. His mouth dropped open

suddenly.

“Who did?”

“I have a way of finding out.”

“You’re morbid, George,” said his friend. “This has been a

strain to you and you don’t know what you’re saying. You’d

better try and sit quiet till morning.”

“He murdered her.”

“It was an accident, George.”

Wilson shook his head. His eyes narrowed and his mouth

widened slightly with the ghost of a superior “Hm!”

“I know,” he said definitely, “I’m one of these trusting fellas

and I don’t think any harm to nobody, but when I get to know a

thing I know it. It was the man in that car. She ran out to speak

to him and he wouldn’t stop.”

Michaelis had seen this too, but it hadn’t occurred to him

that there was any special significance in it. He believed that

Mrs. Wilson had been running away from her husband, rather

than trying to stop any particular car.

“How could she of been like that?”

“She’s a deep one,” said Wilson, as if that answered the

question. “Ah-h-h ——”

He began to rock again, and Michaelis stood twisting the

leash in his hand.

“Maybe you got some friend that I could telephone for,

George?”

This was a forlorn hope — he was almost sure that Wilson

had no friend: there was not enough of him for his wife. He

was glad a little later when he noticed a change in the room, a

blue quickening by the window, and realized that dawn wasn’t

far off. About five o’clock it was blue enough outside to snap

off the light.

Wilson’s glazed eyes turned out to the ashheaps, where small

gray clouds took on fantastic shape and scurried here and

there in the faint dawn wind.

“I spoke to her,” he muttered, after a long silence. “I told her

she might fool me but she couldn’t fool God. I took her to the

window.”— with an effort he got up and walked to the rear

window and leaned with his face pressed against it ——” and I

said ‘God knows what you’ve been doing, everything you’ve

been doing. You may fool me, but you can’t fool God!’”

Standing behind him, Michaelis saw with a shock that he was

looking at the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which had just

emerged, pale and enormous, from the dissolving night.

“God sees everything,” repeated Wilson.

“That’s an advertisement,” Michaelis assured him. Something

made him turn away from the window and look back

into the room. But Wilson stood there a long time, his face

close to the window pane, nodding into the twilight.

By six o’clock Michaelis was worn out, and grateful for the

sound of a car stopping outside. It was one of the watchers of

the night before who had promised to come back, so he cooked

breakfast for three, which he and the other man ate together.

Wilson was quieter now, and Michaelis went home to sleep;

when he awoke four hours later and hurried back to the garage,

Wilson was gone.

His movements — he was on foot all the time — were afterward

traced to Port Roosevelt and then to Gad’s Hill, where he

bought a sandwich that he didn’t eat, and a cup of coffee. He

must have been tired and walking slowly, for he didn’t reach

Gad’s Hill until noon. Thus far there was no difficulty in accounting

for his time — there were boys who had seen a man

“acting sort of crazy,” and motorists at whom he stared oddly

from the side of the road. Then for three hours he disappeared

from view. The police, on the strength of what he said to Michaelis,

that he “had a way of finding out,” supposed that he

spent that time going from garage to garage thereabout, inquiring

for a yellow car. On the other hand, no garage man

who had seen him ever came forward, and perhaps he had an

easier, surer way of finding out what he wanted to know. By

half-past two he was in West Egg, where he asked someone the

way to Gatsby’s house. So by that time he knew Gatsby’s name.

At two o’clock Gatsby put on his bathing-suit and left word

with the butler that if any one phoned word was to be brought

to him at the pool. He stopped at the garage for a pneumatic

mattress that had amused his guests during the summer, and

the chauffeur helped him pump it up. Then he gave instructions

that the open car wasn’t to be taken out under any

circumstances — and this was strange, because the front right

fender needed repair.

Gatsby shouldered the mattress and started for the pool.

Once he stopped and shifted it a little, and the chauffeur asked

him if he needed help, but he shook his head and in a moment

disappeared among the yellowing trees.

No telephone message arrived, but the butler went without

his sleep and waited for it until four o’clock — until long after

there was any one 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 Wolfsheim’s proteges —

heard the shots — afterward he could only say that he hadn’t

thought anything much about them. I drove from the station

directly to Gatsby’s house and my rushing anxiously up the

front steps was the first thing that alarmed any one. 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 compass, a thin red circle in the water.

It was after we started with Gatsby toward the house that the

gardener saw Wilson’s body a little way off in the grass, and

the holocaust was complete.

Chapter 9

**A**fter 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 simplist 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 every one 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 Wolfsheim’s name wasn’t in the phone book. The butler

gave me his office address on Broadway, and I called Information,

but by the time I had the number it was long after

five, and no one answered the phone.

“Will you ring again?”

“I’ve rung them three times.”

“It’s very important.”

“Sorry. I’m afraid no one’s there.”

I went back to the drawing-room and thought for an instant

that they were chance visitors, all these official people who

suddenly filled it. But, as they drew back the sheet and looked

at Gatsby with unmoved 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.”

Some one started to ask me questions, but I broke away and

going up-stairs 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

Wolfsheim, 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. Wolfsheim arrived; no one arrived

except more police and photographers and newspaper men.

When the butler brought back Wolfsheim’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 gray beard that I had difficulty

in getting off his coat. He was on the point of collapse, so

I took him into the music room and made him sit down while I

sent for something to eat. But he wouldn’t eat, and the glass of

milk spilled from his trembling hand.

“I saw it in the Chicago newspaper,” he said. “It was all in

the Chicago newspaper. I started right away.”

“I didn’t know how to reach you.” His eyes, seeing nothing,

moved ceaselessly about the room.

“It was a madman,” he said. “He must have been mad.”

“Wouldn’t you like some coffee?” I urged him.

“I don’t want anything. I’m all right now, Mr.——”

“Carraway.”

“Well, I’m all right now. Where have they got Jimmy?” I took

him into the drawing-room, where his son lay, and left him

there. Some little boys had come up on the steps and were

looking into the hall; when I told them who had arrived, they

went reluctantly away.

After a little while Mr. Gatz opened the door and came out,

his mouth ajar, his face flushed slightly, his eyes leaking isolated

and unpunctual tears. He had reached an age where

death no longer has the quality of ghastly surprise, and when

he looked around him now for the first time and saw the height

and splendor of the hall and the great rooms opening out from

it into other rooms, his grief began to be mixed with an awed

pride. I helped him to a bedroom up-stairs; while he took off

his coat and vest I told him that all arrangements had been deferred

until he came.

“I didn’t know what you’d want, Mr. Gatsby ——”

“Gatz is my name.”

“— Mr. Gatz. I thought you might want to take the body

West.”

He shook his head.

“Jimmy always liked it better down East. He rose up to his

position in the East. Were you a friend of my boy’s, Mr.—?”

“We were close friends.”

“He had a big future before him, you know. He was only a

young man, but he had a lot of brain power here.”

He touched his head impressively, and I nodded.

“If he’d of lived, he’d of been a great man. A man like James

J. Hill. He’d of helped build up the country.”

“That’s true,” I said, uncomfortably.

He fumbled at the embroidered coverlet, trying to take it

from the bed, and lay down stiffly — was instantly asleep.

That night an obviously frightened person called up, and demanded

to know who I was before he would give his name.

“This is Mr. Carraway,” I said.

“Oh!” He sounded relieved. “This is Klipspringer.” I was relieved

too, for that seemed to promise another friend at

Gatsby’s grave. I didn’t want it to be in the papers and draw a

sightseeing crowd, so I’d been calling up a few people myself.

They were hard to find.

“The funeral’s to-morrow,” I said. “Three o’clock, here at the

house. I wish you’d tell anybody who’d be interested.”

“Oh, I will,” he broke out hastily. “Of course I’m not likely to

see anybody, but if I do.”

His tone made me suspicious.

“Of course you’ll be there yourself.”

“Well, I’ll certainly try. What I called up about is ——”

“Wait a minute,” I interrupted. “How about saying you’ll

come?”

“Well, the fact is — the truth of the matter is that I’m staying

with some people up here in Greenwich, and they rather expect

me to be with them to-morrow. In fact, there’s a sort of

picnic or something. Of course I’ll do my very best to get

away.”

I ejaculated an unrestrained “Huh!” and he must have heard

me, for he went on nervously:

“What I called up about was a pair of shoes I left there. Iwonder

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 Wolfsheim; 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 any one 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. Wolfsheim’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 Wolfsheim’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 Wolfsheim stood solemnly

in the doorway, holding out both hands. He drew me into his

office, remarking in a reverent voice that it was a sad time for

all of us, and offered me a cigar.

“My memory goes back to when I first met him,” he said. “A

young major just out of the army and covered over with medals

he got in the war. He was so hard up he had to keep on wearing

his uniform because he couldn’t buy some regular clothes.

First time I saw him was when he come into Winebrenner’s

poolroom at Forty-third Street and asked for a job. He hadn’t

eat anything for a couple of days. ‘come on have some lunch

with me,’ I sid. He ate more than four dollars’ worth of food in

half an hour.”

“Did you start him in business?” I inquired.

“Start him! I made him.”

“Oh.”

“I raised him up out of nothing, right out of the gutter. I saw

right away he was a fine-appearing, gentlemanly young man,

and when he told me he was at Oggsford I knew I could use

him good. I got him to join up in the American Legion and he

used to stand high there. Right off he did some work for a client

of mine up to Albany. We were so thick like that in

everything.”— he held up two bulbous fingers ——” always

together.”

I wondered if this partnership had included the World’s Series

transaction in 1919.

“Now he’s dead,” I said after a moment. “You were his

closest friend, so I know you’ll want to come to his funeral this

afternoon.”

“I’d like to come.”

“Well, come then.”

The hair in his nostrils quivered slightly, and as he shook his

head his eyes filled with tears.

“I can’t do it — I can’t get mixed up in it,” he said.

“There’s nothing to get mixed up in. It’s all over now.”

“When a man gets killed I never like to get mixed up in it in

any way. I keep out. When I was a young man it was different

— if a friend of mine died, no matter how, I stuck with them to

the end. You may think that’s sentimental, but I mean it — to

the bitter end.”

I saw that for some reason of his own he was determined not

to come, so I stood up.

“Are you a college man?” he inquired suddenly.

For a moment I thought he was going to suggest a “gonnegtion,”

but he only nodded and shook my hand.

“Let us learn to show our friendship for a man when he is

alive and not after he is dead,” he suggested. “After that my

own rule is to let everything alone.”

When I left his office the sky had turned dark and I got back

to West Egg in a drizzle. After changing my clothes I went next

door and found Mr. Gatz walking up and down excitedly in the

hall. His pride in his son and in his son’s possessions was continually

increasing and now he had something to show me.

“Jimmy sent me this picture.” He took out his wallet with

trembling fingers. “Look there.”

It was a photograph of the house, cracked in the corners and

dirty with many hands. He pointed out every detail to me

eagerly. “Look there!” and then sought admiration from my

eyes. He had shown it so often that I think it was more real to

him now than the house itself.

“Jimmy sent it to me. I think it’s a very pretty picture. It

shows up well.”

“Very well. Had you seen him lately?”

“He come out to see me two years ago and bought me the

house I live in now. Of course we was broke up when he run off

from home, but I see now there was a reason for it. He knew

he had a big future in front of him. And ever since he made a

success he was very generous with me.” He seemed reluctant

to put away the picture, held it for another minute, lingeringly,

before my eyes. Then he returned the wallet and pulled from

his pocket a ragged old copy of a book called HOPALONG

CASSIDY.

“Look here, this is a book he had when he was a boy. It just

shows you.”

He opened it at the back cover and turned it around for me

to see. On the last fly-leaf was printed the word SCHEDULE,

and the date September 12, 1906. and underneath:

Rise from bed … … … … … . 6.00 A.M. Dumbbell exercise

and wall-scaling … … 6.15-6.30 ” Study electricity, etc … …

… … 7.15-8.15 ” Work … … … … … … … 8.30-4.30 P.M.

Baseball and sports … … … … . 4.30-5.00 ” Practice elocution,

poise and how to attain it 5.00-6.00 ” Study needed inventions

… … … . . 7.00-9.00 ”

GENERAL RESOLVES No wasting time at 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 come across this book by accident,” said the old man. “It

just shows you, don’t it?”

“It just shows you.”

“Jimmy was bound to get ahead. He always had some resolves

like this or something. Do you notice what he’s got

about improving his mind? He was always great for that. He

told me I et like a hog once, and I beat him for it.”

He was reluctant to close the book, reading each item aloud

and then looking eagerly at me. I think he rather expected me

to copy down the list for my own use.

A little before three the Lutheran minister arrived from

Flushing, and I began to look involuntarily out the windows for

other cars. So did Gatsby’s father. And as the time passed and

the servants came in and stood waiting in the hall, his eyes

began to blink anxiously, and he spoke of the rain in a worried,

uncertain way. The minister glanced several times at his

watch, so I took him aside and asked him to wait for half an

hour. But it wasn’t any use. Nobody came.

About five o’clock our procession of three cars reached the

cemetery and stopped in a thick drizzle beside the gate — first

a motor hearse, horribly black and wet, then Mr. Gatz and the

minister and I in the limousine, and a little later four or five

servants and the postman from West Egg in Gatsby’s station

wagon, all wet to the skin. As we started through the gate into

the cemetery I heard a car stop and then the sound of someone

splashing after us over the soggy ground. I looked around. It

was the man with owl-eyed glasses whom I had found marvelling

over Gatsby’s books in the library one night three months

before.

I’d never seen him since then. I don’t know how he knew

about the funeral, or even his name. The rain poured down his

thick glasses, and he took them off and wiped them to see the

protecting canvas unrolled from Gatsby’s grave.

I tried to think about Gatsby then for a moment, but he was

already too far away, and I could only remember, without resentment,

that Daisy hadn’t sent a message or a flower. Dimly I

heard someone murmur, “Blessed are the dead that the rain

falls on,” and then the owl-eyed man said “Amen to that,” in a

brave voice.

We straggled down quickly through the rain to the cars. Owleyes 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

gayeties, to bid them a hasty good-by. 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 color of an autumn leaf, her face the same brown

tint as the fingerless glove on her knee. When I had finished

she told me without comment that she was engaged to another

man. I doubted that, though there were several she could have

married at a nod of her head, but I pretended to be surprised.

For just a minute I wondered if I wasn’t making a mistake, then

I thought it all over again quickly and got up to say good-bye.

“Nevertheless you did throw me over,” said Jordan suddenly.

“You threw me over on the telephone. I don’t give a damn

about you now, but it was a new experience for me, and I felt a

little dizzy for a while.”

We shook hands.

“Oh, and do you remember.”— she added ——” a conversation

we had once about driving a car?”

“Why — not exactly.”

“You said a bad driver was only safe until she met another

bad driver? Well, I met another bad driver, didn’t I? I mean it

was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you

were rather an honest, straightforward person. I thought it was

your secret pride.”

“I’m thirty,” I said. “I’m five years too old to lie to myself and

call it honor.”

She didn’t answer. Angry, and half in love with her, and tremendously

sorry, I turned away.

One afternoon late in October I saw Tom Buchanan. He was

walking ahead of me along Fifth Avenue in his alert, aggressive

way, his hands out a little from his body as if to fight off interference,

his head moving sharply here and there, adapting itself

to his restless eyes. Just as I slowed up to avoid overtaking

him he stopped and began frowning into the windows of a jewelry

store. Suddenly he saw me and walked back, holding out

his hand.

“What’s the matter, Nick? Do you object to shaking hands

with me?”

“Yes. You know what I think of you.”

“You’re crazy, Nick,” he said quickly. “Crazy as hell. I don’t

know what’s the matter with you.”

“Tom,” I inquired, “what did you say to Wilson that afternoon?”

He stared at me without a word, and I knew I had

guessed right about those missing hours. I started to turn

away, but he took a step after me and grabbed my arm.

“I told him the truth,” he said. “He came to the door while we

were getting ready to leave, and when I sent down word that

we weren’t in he tried to force his way up-stairs. He was crazy

enough to kill me if I hadn’t told him who owned the car. His

hand was on a revolver in his pocket every minute he was in

the house ——” He broke off defiantly. “What if I did tell him?

That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes

just like he did in Daisy’s, but he was a tough one. He ran over

Myrtle like you’d run over a dog and never even stopped his

car.”

There was nothing I could say, except the one unutterable

fact that it wasn’t true.

“And if you think I didn’t have my share of suffering — look

here, when I went to give up that flat and saw that damn box of

dog biscuits sitting there on the sideboard, I sat down and

cried like a baby. By God it was awful ——”

I couldn’t forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had

done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and

confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy — they

smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into

their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that

kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess

they had made… .

I shook hands with him; it seemed silly not to, for I felt suddenly

as though I were talking to a child. Then he went into the

jewelry store to buy a pearl necklace — or perhaps only a pair

of cuff buttons — rid of my provincial squeamishness 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 — to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms

farther… . And one fine morning ——

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

**-THE END-**

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The Great Gatsby.