Chapter 1

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| Then wear the gold hat, if that will move her;  If you can bounce high, bounce for her too,  Till she cry "Lover, gold-hatted, high-bouncing lover,  I must have you!"  --THOMAS PARKE D'INVILLIERS  In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.  "Whenever you feel like criticizing 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 short-winded elations of men.  My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this middle-western city for three generations. The Carraways are something of a clan and we have a tradition that we're descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my line was my grandfather's brother who came here in fifty-one, sent a substitute to the Civil War and started the wholesale hardware business that my father carries on today.  I never saw this great-uncle but I'm supposed to look like him--with special reference to the rather hard-boiled painting that hangs in Father's office. I graduated from New Haven in 1915, just a quarter of a century after my father, and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless. Instead of being the warm center of the world the middle-west now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe--so I decided to go east and learn the bond business. Everybody I knew was in the bond business so I supposed it could support one more single man. All my aunts and uncles talked it over as if they were choosing a prep-school for me and finally said, "Why--yees" 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 H?tel 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 eye-sore, but it was a small eye-sore, 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 off shore.  "It belonged to Demaine the oil man." He turned me around again, politely and abruptly. "We'll go inside."  We walked through a high hallway into a bright rosy-colored space, fragilely bound into the house by French windows at either end.  The windows were ajar and gleaming white against the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into the house. A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding cake of the ceiling--and then rippled over the wine-colored rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea.  The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house. I must have stood for a few moments listening to the whip and snap of the curtains and the groan of a picture on the wall.  Then there was a boom as Tom Buchanan shut the rear windows and the caught wind died out about the room and the curtains and the rugs and the two young women ballooned slowly to the floor.  The younger of the two was a stranger to me. She was extended full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless and with her chin raised a little as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of it--indeed, I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her by coming in.  The other girl, Daisy, made an attempt to rise--she leaned slightly forward with a conscientious expression--then she laughed, an absurd, charming little laugh, and I laughed too and came forward into the room.  "I'm p-paralyzed with happiness."  She laughed again, as if she said something very witty, and held my hand for a moment, looking up into my face, promising that there was no one in the world she so much wanted to see. That was a way she had.  She hinted in a murmur that the surname of the balancing girl was Baker.  (I've heard it said that Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming.)  At any rate Miss Baker's lips fluttered, she nodded at me almost imperceptibly and then quickly tipped her head back again--the object she was balancing had obviously tottered a little and given her something of a fright. Again a sort of apology arose to my lips. Almost any exhibition of complete self sufficiency draws a stunned tribute from me.  I looked back at my cousin who began to ask me questions in her low, thrilling voice. It was the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again. Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth--but there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered "Listen," a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour.  I told her how I had stopped off in Chicago for a day on my way east and how a dozen people had sent their love through me.  "Do they miss me?" she cried ecstatically.  "The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath and there's a persistent wail all night along the North Shore."  "How gorgeous! Let's go back, Tom. Tomorrow!" Then she added irrelevantly, "You ought to see the baby."  "I'd like to."  "She's asleep. She's two 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, small-breasted girl, with an erect carriage which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet. Her grey sun-strained eyes looked back at me with polite reciprocal curiosity out of a wan, charming discontented face. It occurred to me now that I had seen her, or a picture of her, somewhere before.  "You live in West Egg," she remarked contemptuously. "I know somebody there."  "I don't know a single----"  "You must know Gatsby."  "Gatsby?" demanded Daisy. "What Gatsby?"  Before I could reply that he was my neighbor dinner was announced; wedging his tense arm imperatively under mine Tom Buchanan compelled me from the room as though he were moving a checker to another square.  Slenderly, languidly, their hands set lightly on their hips the two young women preceded us out 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 Coloured Empires' by this man Goddard?"  "Why, no," I answered, rather surprised by his tone.  "Well, it's a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be--will be utterly submerged.  It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved."  "Tom's getting very profound," said Daisy with an expression of unthoughtful sadness. "He reads deep books with long words in them.  What was that word we----"  "Well, these books are all scientific," insisted Tom, glancing at her impatiently. "This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us who are the dominant race to watch out or these other races will have control of things."  "We've got to beat them down," whispered Daisy, winking ferociously toward the fervent sun.  "You ought to live in California--" began Miss Baker but Tom interrupted her by shifting heavily in his chair.  "This idea is that we're Nordics. I am, and you are and you are and----" After an infinitesimal hesitation he included Daisy with a slight nod and she winked at me again. "--and we've produced all the things that go to make civilization--oh, science and art and all that.  Do you see?"  There was something pathetic in his concentration as if his complacency, more acute than of old, was not enough to him any more. When, almost immediately, the telephone rang inside and the butler left the porch Daisy seized upon the momentary interruption and leaned toward me.  "I'll tell you a family secret," she whispered enthusiastically. "It's about the butler's nose. Do you want to hear about the butler's nose?"  "That's why I came over tonight."  "Well, he wasn't always a butler; he used to be the silver polisher for some people in New York that had a silver service for two hundred people.  He had to polish it from morning till night until finally it began to affect his nose----"  "Things went from bad to worse," suggested Miss Baker.  "Yes. Things went from bad to worse until finally he had to give up his position."  For a moment the last sunshine fell with romantic affection upon her glowing face; her voice compelled me forward breathlessly as I listened--then the glow faded, each light deserting her with lingering regret like children leaving a pleasant street at dusk.  The butler came back and murmured something close to Tom's ear whereupon Tom frowned, pushed back his chair and without a word went inside. As if his absence quickened something within her Daisy leaned forward again, her voice glowing and singing.  "I love to see you at my table, Nick. You remind me of a--of a rose, an absolute rose. Doesn't he?" She turned to Miss Baker for confirmation.  "An absolute rose?"  This was untrue. I am not even faintly like a rose. She was only extemporizing but a stirring warmth flowed from her as if her heart was trying to come out to you concealed in one of those breathless, thrilling words. Then suddenly she threw her napkin on the table and excused herself and went into the house.  Miss Baker and I exchanged a short glance consciously devoid of meaning. I was about to speak when she sat up alertly and said "Sh!" in a warning voice. A subdued impassioned murmur was audible in the room beyond and Miss Baker leaned forward, unashamed, trying to hear. The murmur trembled on the verge of coherence, sank down, mounted excitedly, and then ceased altogether.  "This Mr. Gatsby you spoke of is my 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 gayety.  She sat down, glanced searchingly at Miss Baker and then at me and continued: "I looked outdoors for a minute and it's very romantic outdoors. There's a bird on the lawn that I think must be a nightingale come over on the Cunard or White Star Line. He's singing away----" her voice sang "----It's romantic, isn't it, Tom?"  "Very romantic," he said, and then miserably to me: "If it's light enough after dinner I want to take you down to the stables."  The telephone rang inside, startlingly, and as Daisy shook her head decisively at Tom the subject of the stables, in fact all subjects, vanished into air. Among the broken fragments of the last five minutes at table I remember the candles being lit again, pointlessly, and I was conscious of wanting to look squarely at every one and yet to avoid all eyes. I couldn't guess what Daisy and Tom were thinking but I doubt if even Miss Baker who seemed to have mastered a certain hardy skepticism was able utterly to put this fifth guest's shrill metallic urgency out of mind. To a certain temperament the situation might have seemed intriguing--my own instinct was to telephone immediately for the police.  The horses, needless to say, were not mentioned again. Tom and Miss Baker, with several feet of twilight between them strolled back into the library, as if to a vigil beside a perfectly tangible body, while trying to look pleasantly interested and a little deaf I followed Daisy around a chain of connecting verandas to the porch in front. In its deep gloom we sat down side by side on a wicker settee.  Daisy took her face in her hands, as if feeling its lovely shape, and her eyes moved gradually out into the velvet dusk. I saw that turbulent emotions possessed her, so I asked what I thought would be some sedative questions about her little girl.  "We don't know each other very well, Nick," she said suddenly.  "Even if we are cousins. You didn't come to my wedding."  "I wasn't back from the war."  "That's true." She hesitated. "Well, I've had a very bad time, Nick, and I'm pretty cynical about everything."  Evidently she had reason to be. I waited but she didn't say any more, and after a moment I returned rather feebly to the subject of her daughter.  "I suppose she talks, and--eats, and everything."  "Oh, yes." She looked at me absently. "Listen, Nick; let me tell you what I said when she was born. Would you like to hear?"  "Very much."  "It'll show you how I've gotten to feel about--things. Well, she was less than an hour old and Tom was God knows where. I woke up out of the ether with an utterly abandoned feeling and asked the nurse right away if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl, and so I turned my head away and wept. 'All right,' I said, 'I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool--that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool."  "You see I think everything's terrible anyhow," she went on in a convinced way. "Everybody thinks so--the most advanced people. And I KNOW.  I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything."  Her eyes flashed around her in a defiant way, rather like Tom's, and she laughed with thrilling scorn. "Sophisticated--God, I'm sophisticated!"  The instant her voice broke off, ceasing to compel my attention, my belief, I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said.  It made me uneasy, as though the whole evening had been a trick of some sort to exact a contributory emotion from me. I waited, and sure enough, in a moment she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged.  Inside, the crimson room bloomed with light. Tom and Miss Baker sat at either end of the long couch and she read aloud to him from the "Saturday Evening Post"--the words, murmurous and uninflected, running together in a soothing tune. The lamp-light, bright on his boots and dull on the autumn-leaf yellow of her hair, glinted along the paper as she turned a page with a flutter of slender muscles in her arms.  When we came in she held us silent for a moment with a lifted hand.  "To be continued," she said, tossing the magazine on the table, "in our very next issue."  Her body asserted itself with a restless movement of her knee, and she stood up.  "Ten o'clock," she remarked, apparently finding the time on the ceiling. "Time for this good girl to go to bed."  "Jordan's going to play in the tournament tomorrow," explained Daisy, "over at Westchester."  "Oh,--you're JORdan Baker."  I knew now why her face was familiar--its pleasing contemptuous expression had looked out at me from many rotogravure pictures of the sporting life at Asheville and Hot Springs and Palm Beach. I had heard some story of her too, a critical, unpleasant story, but what it was I had forgotten long ago.  "Good night," she said softly. "Wake me at eight, won't you."  "If you'll get up."  "I will. Good night, Mr. Carraway. See you anon."  "Of course you will," confirmed Daisy. "In fact I think I'll arrange a marriage. Come over often, Nick, and I'll sort of--oh--fling you together. You know--lock you up accidentally in linen closets and push you out to sea in a boat, and all that sort of thing----"  "Good night," called Miss Baker from the stairs. "I haven't heard a word."  "She's a nice girl," said Tom after a moment. "They oughtn't to let her run around the country this way."  "Who oughtn't to?" inquired Daisy coldly.  "Her family."  "Her family is one aunt about a thousand years old. Besides, Nick's going to look after her, aren't you, Nick? She's going to spend lots of 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. | 那就戴顶金帽子，如果能打动她的心肠；  如果你能跳得高，就为她也跳一跳，  跳到她高呼：“情郎，戴金帽、跳得高的情郎，  我一定得把你要！”  托马斯•帕克•丹维里埃  我年纪还轻，阅历不深的时候，我父亲教导过我一句话，我至今还念念不忘。  “每逢你想要批评任何人的时候，”他对我说，“你就记住，这个世界上所有的人，井不是个个都有过你拥有的那些优越条件。”  他没再说别的。但是，我们父子之间话虽不多，却一向是非常通气的，因此我明白他的话大有弦外之音。久而久之，我就惯于对所有的人都保留判断，这个习惯既使得许多有怪僻的人肯跟我讲心里话，也使我成为不少爱唠叨的惹人厌烦的人的受害者。这个特点在正常的人身上出现的时候，心理不正常的人很快就会察觉并区抓住不放。由于这个缘故，我上大学的时候就被不公正地指责为小政客，因为我与闻一些放荡的、不知名的人的秘密的伤心事。绝大多数的隐私都不是我打听来的— —每逢我根据某种明白无误的迹象看出又有一次倾诉衷情在地平线上喷薄欲出的时候，我往往假装睡觉，假装心不在焉，或者装出不怀好意的轻挑态度。因为青年人倾诉的衷情，或者至少他们表达这些衷情所用的语言，往往是剽窃性的，而且多有明显的隐瞒。保留判断是表示怀有无限的希望。我现在仍然唯恐错过什么东西，如果我忘记（如同我父亲带着优越感所暗示过的，我现在又带着优越感重复的）基本的道德观念是在人出世的时候就分配不均的。  在这样夸耀我的宽容之后，我得承认宽容也有个限度。人的行为可能建立在坚固的岩石上面，也可能建立在潮湿的沼泽之中，但是一过某种程度，我就不管它是建立在什么上面的了。去年秋天我从东部回来的时候，我觉得我希望全世界的人都穿上军装，并且永远在道德上保持一种立正姿势。我不再要参与放浪形骸的游乐，也不再要偶尔窥见人内心深处的荣幸了。唯有盖茨比——就是把名字赋予本书的那个人——除外，不属于我这种反应的范围——盖茨比，他代表我所真心鄙夷的一切。假如人的品格是一系列连续不断的成功的姿态，那么这个人身上就有一种瑰丽的异彩，他对于人生的希望具有一种高度的敏感，类似一台能够记录万里以外的地震的错综复杂的仪器。这种敏感和通常美其名曰“创造性气质”的那种软绵绵的感受性毫不相干——它是一种异乎寻常的水葆希望的天赋，一种富于浪漫色彩的敏捷，这是我在别人身上从来发现过的，也是我今后不大可能会再发现的。不——盖茨比本人到头来倒是无可厚非的、使我对人们短暂的悲哀和片刻的欢欣暂时丧失兴趣的，却是那些吞噬盖茨比心灵的东西，是在他的幻梦消逝后跟踪而来的恶浊的灰尘。  我家三代以来都是这个中西部城市家道殷实的头面人物。姓卡罗威的也可算是个世家，据家平传说我们是布克娄奇公爵的后裔，但是我们家系的实际创始人却是我祖父的哥哥。他在一八五一年来到这里，买了个替身去参加南北战争，开始做起五金批发生意，也就是我父东今天还在经营的买卖。  我从未见过这位伯祖父，但是据说我长得像他，特别有挂在父亲办公室里的那幅铁板面孔的画像为证。我在一九一五年从纽黑文毕业，刚好比我父亲晚四分之一个世纪，不久以后我就参加了那个称之为世界大战的延迟的条顿民族大迁徙、我在反攻中感到其乐无穷，回来以后就觉得百无聊赖了。中西部不再是世界温暖的中心，而倒像是宇宙的荒凉的边缘——于是我决定到东部去学债券生意。我所认识的人个个都是做债券生意的，因此我认为它多养活一个单身汉总不成问题。我的叔伯姑姨们商量了一番，他们怦然是在为我挑选一家预备学校，最后才说：“呃…… 那就……这样吧。”面容都很严肃而犹疑。父亲答应为我提供一年的费用，然后又几经耽搁我才在一九二二年春天到东部去，自以为是一去不返的了。  切合实际的办法是在城里找一套房寄宿，但那时已是温暖的季节，而我又是刚刚离开了一个有宽阔的草坪和宜人的树木的地方，因此办公室里一个年轻人提议我们俩到近郊合租一所房子的时候，我觉得那是个很妙的主意。他找到了房子，那是一座风雨剥蚀的木板平房，月租八十美元，可是在最后一分钟公司把他调到华盛顿去了，我也就只好一个人搬到郊外去住。我有一条狗——至少在它跑掉以前我养了它几天——一辆旧道吉汽车和一个芬兰女佣人，她替我收拾床铺，烧早饭，在电炉上一面做饭，一面嘴里咕哝着芬兰的格言。  头几天我感到孤单，直到一天早上有个人，比我更是新来乍到的，在路上拦住了我。  “到西卵村去怎么走啊？”他无可奈何地问我。  我告诉了他。我再继续往前走的时候，我不再感到孤单了。我成了领路人、开拓者、一个原始的移民。他无意之中授予了我这一带地方的荣誉市民权。  眼看阳光明媚，树木忽然间长满了叶子，就像电影里的东西长得那么快，我就又产生了那个熟悉的信念，觉得生命随着夏天的来临又重新开始了。  有那么多书要读，这是一点，同时从清新宜人的空气中也有那么多营养要汲取。我买了十来本有关银行业、信贷和投资证券的书籍，一本本红色烫金封皮的书立在书架上，好像造币厂新铸的钱币一样，准备揭示迈达斯、摩根和米赛纳斯的秘诀。除此之外，我还有雄心要读许多别的书。我在大学的时候是喜欢舞文弄墨的——有一年我给《耶鲁新闻》写过一连串一本正经而又平淡无奇的社论—— 现在我准备把诸如此类的东西重新纳入我的生活，重新成为“通才”，也就是那种最浅薄的专家。这并不只是一个俏皮的警句——光从一个窗口去观察人生究竟要成功得多。  纯粹出于偶然，我租的这所房子在北美最离奇的一个村镇。这个村镇位于纽约市正东那个细长的奇形怪状的小岛上——那里除了其他大然奇观以外，还有两个地方形状异乎寻常。离城二十英里路，有一对其大无比的鸡蛋般的半岛，外形一模一样，中间隔着一条小湾，一直伸进西半球那片最恬静的咸水，长岛海峡那个巨大的潮湿的场院。它们并不是正椭圆形——而是像哥伦布故事里的鸡蛋一样，在碰过的那头都是压碎了的——但是它们外貌的相似一定是使从头上飞过的海鸥惊异不已的源泉。对于没有翅膀的人类来说，一个更加饶有趣味的现象，却是这两个地方除了形状大小之外，在每一个方面都截然不同。  我住在西卵，这是两个地方中比较不那么时髦的一个，不过这是一个非常肤浅的标签，不足以表示二者之间那种离奇古怪而又很不吉祥的对比。我的房子紧靠在鸡蛋的顶端，离海湾只有五十码，挤在两座每季租金要一万二到一万五的大别墅中间。我右边的那一幢，不管按什么标准来说，都是一个庞然大物——它是诺曼底某市政厅的翻版，一边有一座簇新的塔楼，上面疏疏落落地覆盖着一层常春藤，还有一座大理石游泳池，以及四十多英亩的草坪和花园。这是盖茨比的公馆。或者更确切地说这是一位姓盖茨比的阔人所住的公馆，因为我还不认识盖茨比光生。我自己的房子实在难看，幸而很小，没有被人注意，因此我才有缘欣赏一片海景，欣赏我邻居草坪的一部分，并且能以与百万富翁为邻而引以自慰——所有这一切每月只需出八十美元。  小湾对岸，东卵豪华住宅区的洁白的宫殿式的大厦沿着水边光彩夺目，那个夏天的故事是从我开车去那边到汤姆•布坎农夫妇家吃饭的那个晚上才真正开始的。黛西是我远房表妹，汤姆是我在大学里就认识的。大战刚结束之后，我在芝加哥还在他们家住过两天。  她的丈夫，除了擅长其他各种运动之外，曾经是纽黑文有史以来最伟大的橄榄球运动员之———也可说是个全国闻名的人物，这种人二十一岁就在有限范围内取得登峰造极的成就，从此以后一切都不免有走下坡路的味道了。他家里非常有钱— —还在大学时他那样任意花钱已经遭人非议，但现在他离开了芝加哥搬到东部来，搬家的那个排场可真要使人惊讶不已。比方说，他从森林湖运来整整一群打马球用的马匹。在我这一辈人中竞然还有人阔到能够干这种事，实在令人难以置信。  他们为什么到东部来，我并不知道。他们并没有什么特殊的理由，在法国待了一年，后来又不安定地东飘西荡，所去的地方都有人打马球，而且大家都有钱。这次是定居了，黛西在电话里说。可是我并不相信——我看不透黛西的心思，不过我觉得汤姆会为追寻某场无法重演的球赛的戏剧性的激奋，就这样略有点怅惘地永远飘荡下去。  于是，在一个温暖有风的晚上，我开车到东卵去看望两个我几乎完全不了解的老朋友。他们的房子比我料想的还要豪华，一座鲜明悦目，红白二色的乔治王殖民时代式的大厦，面临着海湾。草坪从海滩起步，直奔大门，足足有四分之一英甲，一路跨过日文、砖径和火红的花园——最后跑到房子跟前，仿佛借助于奔跑的势头，爽性变成绿油油的常春藤，沿着墙往上爬。房子正面有一溜法国式的落地长窗，此刻在夕照中金光闪闪，迎着午后的暖风敞开着。汤姆•布坎农身穿骑装，两腿叉开，站在前门阳台上。  从纽黑文时代以来，他样子已经变了。现在他是三十多岁的人了，时体健壮，头发稻草色，嘴边略带狠相，举止高傲。两只炯炯有神的傲慢的眼睛已经在他脸上占了支配地位，给人一种永远盛气凌人的印象。即使他那会像女人穿的优雅的骑装也掩藏不住那个身躯的巨大的体力——他仿佛填满了那双雪亮的皮靴，把上面的带子绷得紧紧的。他的肩膀转动时，你可以看到一大块肌肉在他薄薄的上衣下面移动。这是一个力大无比的身躯，一个残忍的身躯。  他说话的声音，又粗又大的男高音，增添了他给人的性情暴戾的印象。他说起话来还带着一种长辈教训人的口吻，即使对他喜欢的人也样、因此在纽黑文的时候时他恨之入骨的大有人在。  “我说，你可别认为我在这些问题上的意见是说了算的，”他仿佛在说，“仅仅因为我力气比你大，比你更有男子汉气概。”我们俩属于同一个高年级学生联谊会，然而我们的关系并不密切，我总觉得他很看重我，而且带着他那特有的粗野、蛮横的怅惘神气，希望我也喜欢他。  我们在阳光和煦的阳台上谈了几分钟。  “我这地方很不错。”他说，他的眼睛不停地转来转去。  他抓住我的一只胳臂把我转过身来，伸出一只巨大的手掌指点眼前的景色，在一挥手之中包括了一座意大利式的凹型花园，半英亩地深色的、浓郁的玫瑰花，以及一艘在岸边随着浪潮起伏的狮子鼻的汽艇  “这地方原来属于石油大王德梅因。”他又把我推转过身来，客客气气但是不容分说，“我们到里面去吧。”  我们穿过一条高高的走廊，走进一间宽敞明亮的玫瑰色的屋子。两头都是落地长窗，把这间屋子轻巧地嵌在这座房子当中。这些长窗都半开着。在外面嫩绿的草地的映衬下，显得晶莹耀眼，那片草仿佛要长到室内来似的。一阵轻风吹过屋里，把窗帘从一头吹进来，又从另一头吹出去，好像一面面白旗，吹向天花板上糖花结婚蛋糕似的装饰；然后轻轻拂过绛色地毯，留下一阵阴影有如风吹海面。  屋子里唯一完全静止的东西是一张庞大的长沙发椅，上面有两个年轻的女人，活像浮在一个停泊在地面的大气球上。她们俩都身穿白衣，衣裙在风中飘荡，好像她们乘气球绕着房子飞了一圈刚被风吹回来似的。我准是站了好一会，倾听窗帘刮动的劈啪声和墙上一幅挂像嘎吱嘎吱的响声。忽然砰然一声，汤姆•布坎农关上了后面的落地窗，室内的余风才渐渐平息，窗帘、地毯和两位少妇也都慢慢地降落地面。  两个之中比较年轻的那个，我不认识。她平躺在长沙发的一头，身子一动也不动，下巴稍微向上仰起，仿佛她在上面平衡着一件什么东西，生怕它掉下来似的。如果她从眼角中看到了我，她可毫无表示——其实我倒吃了一惊，差一点要张口向她道歉，因为我的进来惊动1她。  另外那个少妇，黛西，想要站起身来——她身子微微向前倾，一脸诚心诚意的表情——接着她噗嗤一笑，又滑稽又可爱地轻轻一笑，我也跟着笑了，接着就走上前去进了屋子。  “我高兴得瘫……瘫掉了。”  她又笑了一次，好像她说了一句非常俏皮的话，接着就拉住我的手，仰起脸看着我，表示世界上没有第二个人是她更高兴见到的了。那是她特有的一种表情。她低声告诉我那个在搞平衡动作的姑娘姓贝克（我听人说过，黛西的喃喃低语只是为了让人家把身子向她靠近，这是不相干的闲话，丝毫无损于这种表情的魅力）。  不管怎样，贝克小姐的嘴唇微微一动，她几乎看不出来地向我点了点头，接着赶忙把头又仰回去——她在保持平衡的那件东西显然歪了一下，让她吃了一惊。道歉的话又一次冒到了我的嘴边。这种几乎是完全我行我素的神情总是使我感到目瞪口呆，满心赞佩。  我掉过头去看我的表妹，她开始用她那低低的、令人激动的声音向我提问题。这是那种叫人侧耳倾听的声音，仿佛每句话都是永远不会重新演奏的一组音符。她的脸庞忧郁而美丽，脸上有明媚的神采，有两只明媚的眼睛，有一张明媚而热情的嘴，但是她声音甲有一种激动人心的特质，那是为她倾倒过的男人都觉得难以忘怀的：一种抑扬动听的魅力，一声喃喃的“听着”，一种暗示，说她片刻以前刚刚干完一些赏心乐事，而且下一个小时里还有赏心乐事。  我告诉了她我到东部来的途中曾在芝加哥停留一天，有十来个朋友都托我向她问好。  “他们想念我吗？”她欣喜若狂地喊道。  “全城都凄凄惨惨。所有的汽车都把左后轮漆上了黑漆当花圈，进入城北的湖边整夜哀声不绝于耳。”  “太美了！汤姆，咱们回去吧。明天，”随即她又毫不相干地说：“你应当看看宝宝。”  “我很想看。”  “她睡着了。她三岁。你从没见过她吗？”  “从来没有。”  “那么你应当看看她。她是……”  汤姆•布坎农本来坐立不安地在屋子平来回走动，现在停了下来把一只手放在我肩上。  “你在干什么买卖，尼克？”  “我在做债券生意。”  “在哪家公司？”  我告诉了他。  “从来没听说过。”他断然地说。  这使我感到不痛快。  “你会听到的，”我简慢地答道，“你在东部待久了就会听到的。”  “噢，我一定会在东部待下来的，你放心吧。”他先望望黛西又望望我，仿佛他在提防还有别的什么名堂。“我要是个天大的傻瓜才会到任何别的地方去住。”  这时贝克小姐说：“绝对如此！”来得那么突然，使我吃了一惊——这是我进了屋子之后她说的第一句话。显然她的话也使她自己同样吃惊、因为她打了个呵欠，随即做了一连串迅速而灵巧的动作就站了起来。  “我都木了，”她抱怨道，“我在那张沙发上躺了不知多久了。”  “别盯着我看，”黛西回嘴说，“我整个下午都在动员你上纽约去。”  “不要，谢谢，”贝克小姐对着刚从食品间端来的四杯鸡尾酒说，“我正一板一眼地在进行锻炼哩。”  她的男主人难以置信地看着她。  “是嘛！”他把自己的酒喝了下去，仿佛那是杯底的一滴。“我真不明白你怎么可能做得成什么事情。”  我看看贝克小姐，感到纳闷，她“做得成”的是什么事。我喜欢看她。她是个身材苗条、乳房小小的姑娘，由于她像个年轻的军校学员那样挺起胸膛更显得英俊挺拔。她那双被太阳照得眯缝着的灰眼睛也看着我，一张苍白、可爱、不满的脸上流露出有礼貌的、回敬的好奇心。我这才想起我以前在什么地方见过她，或者她的照片。  “你住在西卵吧！”她用鄙夷的口气说，“我认识那边的一个人。”  “我一个人也不认……”  “你总该认识盖茨比吧。”  “盖茨比？”黛西追问道，“哪个盖茨比？”  我还没来得及回答说他是我的邻居，佣人就宣布开饭了。汤姆•布坎农不由分说就把一只紧张的胳臂插在我的胳臂下面，把我从屋子里推出去，仿佛他是在把一个棋子推到棋盘上另一格去似的。  两位女郎袅袅婷婷地、懒洋洋地，手轻轻搭在腰上，在我们前面往外走上玫瑰色的阳台。阳台迎着落日，餐桌上有四支蜡烛在减弱了的风中闪烁不定。  “点蜡烛干什么？”黛西皱着眉头表示不悦。她用手指把它们掐灭了。“再过两个星期就是一年中最长的一天了。”她满面春风地看着我们大家。“你们是否老在等一年中最长的一天，到头来偏偏还是会错过？我老在等一年中最长的一天，到头来偏偏还是错过了。”  “我们应当计划干点什么。”贝克小姐打着阿欠说道，仿佛上床睡觉似的在桌子旁边坐了下来。  “好吧，”黛西说，“咱们计划什么呢？”她把脸转向我，无可奈何地问道， “人们究竟计划些什么？”  我还没来得及回答，她便两眼带着畏惧的表情盯着她的小手指。  “瞧！”她抱怨道，“我把它碰伤了。”  我们大家都瞧了——指关节有点青紫。  “是你搞的，汤姆，”她责怪他说，“我知道你不是故意的，但确实是你搞的。这是我的报应，嫁给这么个粗野的男人，一个又粗又大又笨拙的汉子……”  “我恨笨拙这个词，”汤姆气呼呼地抗议道，“即使开玩笑也不行。”  “笨拙。”黛西强嘴说。  有时她和贝克小姐同时讲话，可是并不惹人注意，不过开点无关紧要的玩笑，也算不上唠叨，跟她们的白色衣裙以及没有任何欲念的超然的眼睛一样冷漠。她们坐在这里，应酬汤姆和我，只不过是客客气气地尽力款待客人或者接受款待。她们知道一会儿晚饭就吃完了，再过一会儿这一晚也就过去，随随便便就打发掉了。这和西部截然不同，在那里每逢晚上二待客总是迫不及待地从一个阶段到另一个阶段推向结尾，总是有所期待而又不断地感到失望，要不然就对结尾时刻的到来感到十分紧张和恐惧。  “你让我觉得自己不文明，黛西，”我喝第二杯虽然有点软木塞气味却相当精彩的红葡萄酒时坦白地说，“你不能谈谈庄稼或者谈点儿别的什么吗？”  我说这句话并没有什么特殊的用意，但它却出乎意外地被人接过去了。  “文明正在崩溃，”汤姆气势汹汹地大声说，“我近来成了个对世界非常悲观的人。你看过戈达德这个人写的《有色帝国的兴起》吗？”  “呃，没有。”我答道，对他的语气感到很吃惊。  “我说，这是一本很好的书，人人都应当读一读。书的大意是说，如果我们不当心，白色人种就会……就会完全被淹没了。讲的全是科学道理，已经证明了的。”  “汤姆变得很渊博了。”黛西说，脸上露出一种并不深切的忧伤的表情。“他看一些深奥的书，书里有许多深奥的字眼。那是个什么字来着，我们……”  “我说，这些书都是有科学根据的，”汤姆一个劲地说下去，对她不耐烦地瞅了一眼，“这家伙把整个道理讲得一清二楚。我们是占统治地位的人种，我们有责任提高警惕，不然的话，其他人种就会掌握一切且  “我们非打倒他们不可。”黛西低声地讲，一面拼命地对炽热的太阳眨眼。  “你们应当到加利福尼亚安家……”贝克小姐开口说，可是汤姆在椅子沉重地挪动了一下身子，打断了她的话。  “主要的论点是说我们是北欧日耳曼民族。我是，你是，你也是，还有………” 稍稍犹疑了一下之后，他点了点头把黛西也包括了进去，这时她又冲我睡了眨眼。 “而我们创造了所有那些加在一起构成文明的东西——科学艺术啦，以及其他等等。你们明白吗？”  他那副专心致志的劲头看上去有点可怜，似乎他那种自负的态度，虽然比往日还突出，但对他来说已经很不够了。这时屋子里电话铃响了。男管家离开阳台去接，黛西几乎立刻就抓住这个打岔的机会把脸凑到我面前来。  “我要告诉你一桩家庭秘密，”她兴奋地咬耳朵说，“是关于男管家的鼻子的。你想听听男管家鼻子的故事吗？”  “这正是我今晚来拜访的目的嘛。”  “你要知道，他并不是一向当男管家的。他从前专门替纽约一个人家擦银器，那家有一套供二百人用的银餐具。他从早擦到晚，后来他的鼻子就受不了啦……”  “后来情况越来越坏。”贝克小姐提了一句。  “是的。情况越来越坏，最后他只得辞掉不干。”  有一会儿工夫夕阳的余辉温情脉脉地照在她那红艳发光的脸上她的声音使我身不由主地凑上前去屏息倾听——然后光彩逐渐消逝，每一道光都依依不舍地离开了她，就像孩子们在黄昏时刻离汗一条愉快的街道那样。  男管家回来凑着汤姆的耳朵咕哝了点什么，汤姆听了眉头一皱，把他的椅子朝后一推，一言不发就走进室内去。仿佛他的离去使她活跃了起来，黛西又探身向前，她的声音像唱歌似的抑扬动听。  “我真高兴在我的餐桌上见到你，尼克。你使我想到一朵——一朵玫瑰花，一朵地地道道的玫瑰花。是不是？”她把脸转向贝克小姐，要求她附和这句话，“一朵地地道道的玫瑰花？”  这是瞎说。我跟玫瑰花毫无相似之处。她不过是随嘴乱说一气，但是却洋溢着一种动人的激情，仿佛她的心就藏在那些气喘吁吁的、激动人心的话语里，想向你倾诉一番。然后她突然把餐巾往桌上一扔，说了声“对不起”就走进房子里面去了。  贝克小姐和我互相使了一下眼色，故意表示没有任何意思。我刚想开口的时候，她警觉地坐直起来，用警告的声音说了一声“嘘”。可以听得见那边屋子里有一阵低低的、激动的交谈声，贝克小姐就毫无顾忌地探身竖起耳朵去听。喃喃的话语声几次接近听得真的程度，降低卜去，又激动地高上去，然后完全终止。  “你刚才提到的那位盖茨比先生是我的邻居……”我开始说。  “别说话，我要听听出了什么事。”  “是出了事吗？”我天真地问。  “难道说你不知道吗？”贝克小姐说，她真的感到奇怪，“我以为人人都知道了。”  “我可不知道。”  “哎呀……”她犹疑了一下说，“汤姆在纽约有个女人。”  “有个女人人？”我茫然地跟着说。  贝克小姐点点头。  “她起码该顾点大体，不在吃饭的时候给他打电话嘛。你说呢？”  我几乎还没明白她的意思，就听见一阵裙衣悉碎和皮靴格格的声响，汤姆和黛西回到餐桌上来了。  “真没办法！”黛西强作欢愉地大声说。  她坐了下来，先朝贝克小姐然后朝我察看了一眼，又接着说：“我到外面看一下，看到外面浪漫极了。草坪上有一只鸟，我想一定是搭康拉德或者白星轮船公司的船过来的一只夜莺。它在不停地歌唱……”她的声音也像唱歌一般，“很浪漫，是不是，汤姆？”  “非常浪漫。”他说，然后哭丧着脸对我说，“吃过饭要是天还够亮的话，我要领你到马房去看看。”  里面电话又响了，大家都吃了一惊。黛西断然地对汤姆摇摇头，于是马房的话题，事实上所有的话题，都化为乌有了。在餐桌上最后五分钟残存的印象中，我记得蜡烛又无缘无故地点着了，同时我意识到自己很想正眼看看大家，然而却又想避开大家的目光。我猜不出黛西和汤姆想什么，但是我也怀疑，就连贝克小姐那样似乎玩世不恭的人，是否能把这第五位客人尖锐刺耳的迫切呼声完全置之度外。对某种性情的人来说，这个局面可能倒怪有意思的——我自己本能的反应是立刻去打电话叫警察。  马，不用说，就没有再提了。汤姆和贝克小姐，两人中间隔着几英尺的暮色，慢慢溜达着回书房去，仿佛走到一个确实存在的尸体旁边去守夜。同时，我一面装出感兴趣的样子，一面装出有点聋，跟着黛西穿过一连串的走廊，走到前面的阳台上去。在苍茫的暮色中我们并排在一张柳条的长靠椅上坐下。  黛西把脸捧在手里，好像在抚摩她那可爱的面庞，同时她渐渐放眼人看那人鹅绒般的暮色。我看出她心潮澎湃，于是我问了几个我认为有镇静作用的关于她小女儿的问题。  “我们彼此并不熟识，尼克，”她忽然说，“尽管我们是表亲。你没参加我的婚礼。”  “我打仗还没回来。”  “确实。”她犹疑了一下，“哎，我可真够受的，尼克，所以我把一切都差不多看透了。”  显然她抱这种看法是有缘故的。我等着听，可是她没再往下说，过了一会儿我又吞吞吐吐地回到了她女儿这个话题。  “我想她一定会说，又……会吃，什么都会吧。”  “呃，是啊。”她心不在焉地看着我，“听我说，尼克，让我告诉你她出世的时候我说了什么话。你想听吗？”  “非常想听 |