

FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD



ИНОСТРАННЫЙ ЯЗЫК: УЧИМСЯ У КЛАССИКОВ

**«Великий Гэтсби»
и другие лучшие
произведения
Ф. С. Фицджеральда**

ORIGINAL

- * THE GREAT GATSBY
- * TENDER IS THE NIGHT
- * BEST SHORT STORIES

Иностранный язык: учимся у классиков

Francis Fitzgerald

**«Великий Гэтсби» и другие лучшие
произведения Ф.С. Фицджеральда**

«ЭКСМО»

2015

УДК 811.111(075.4)
ББК 81.2Англ-9

Fitzgerald F. S.

«Великий Гэтсби» и другие лучшие произведения
Ф.С. Фицджеральда / F. S. Fitzgerald — «Эксмо»,
2015 — (Иностранный язык: учимся у классиков)

«Иностранный язык: учимся у классиков» — это только оригинальные тексты лучших произведений мировой литературы. Эти книги станут эффективным и увлекательным пособием для изучающих иностранный язык на хорошем «продолжающем» и «продвинутом» уровне. Они помогут эффективно расширить словарный запас, подскажут, где и как правильно употреблять устойчивые выражения и грамматические конструкции, просто подарят радость от чтения. В конце книги дана краткая информация о культуроведческих, страноведческих, исторических и географических реалиях описываемого периода, которая поможет лучше ориентироваться в тексте произведения. Серия «Иностранный язык: учимся у классиков» адресована широкому кругу читателей, хорошо владеющих английским языком и стремящихся к его совершенствованию.

УДК 811.111(075.4)
ББК 81.2Англ-9

© Fitzgerald F. S., 2015
© Эксмо, 2015

Содержание

The Great Gatsby	6
Chapter I	6
Chapter II	16
Chapter III	23
Chapter IV	33
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	42

Скотт Фрэнсис Фицджеральд «Великий Гэтсби» и другие лучшие произведения Ф.С. Фицджеральда

В оформлении обложки использована иллюстрация Georges Barbier
Archives Charmet / Bridgeman Images / Fotodom.ru

© Самуэльян Н.А., составление комментариев, 2015

© ООО «Издательство «Эксмо», 2015

The Great Gatsby

Chapter I

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

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

He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all 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 East¹ 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 War², 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 Haven³ in 1915, just a

¹ **the East** – here: the Eastern states of the USA

² **the Civil War** – the American Civil War of 1861–1865 between the United States of America and the Confederate States of America (11 Southern states that seceded from the Union in 1860)

³ **New Haven** – Americans associate New Haven with Yale University – a private university in New Haven, Connecticut; the third oldest university in the United States, founded in 1701, it was named for Elihu Yale, a British philanthropist.

quarter of a century after my father, and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic⁴ migration known as the Great War⁵. 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 village⁶?’ he asked helplessly.

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

And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer.

There was so much to read, for one thing, and so much fine health to be pulled down out of the young breath-giving air. I bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from the mint, promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas⁷ and Morgan⁸ and Maecenas⁹ 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 Sound¹⁰. They are not perfect ovals – like the egg in the Columbus story¹¹, they are both crushed flat at the contact end – but their physical resemblance must be a source of perpetual wonder to the gulls that fly overhead. To the wingless a more interesting phenomenon is their dissimilarity in every particular except shape and size.

⁴ **Teutonic** = Germanic; Teutonic peoples were peoples of the Germanic group of the Indo-European family.

⁵ **the Great War** – World War I of 1914–1918

⁶ **West Egg village** – a residential area of Long Island

⁷ **Midas** – in Greco-Roman legend, a foolish and greedy king of Phrygia who wished everything he touched turn into gold

⁸ **Morgan** – John Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), a prominent American financier and industrialist

⁹ **Maecenas** – Gaius Maecenas (70 BC–8 BC), a Roman diplomat, statesman and patron of Virgil and Horace, the most famous ancient Roman poets

¹⁰ **Long Island Sound** – the arm of the Atlantic Ocean between the states of New York and Connecticut in the north and Long Island in the south; *Long Island* is an island in the Atlantic Ocean in the southeast of New York state, parallel to the shore of Connecticut.

¹¹ **the egg in the Columbus story** – the egg crushed flat at one end; here: the unusual shape of the formation of land.

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 yards¹² 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 Ville¹³ in Normandy¹⁴, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres¹⁵ of lawn and garden. It was Gatsby's mansion. Or, rather, as I didn't know Mr. Gatsby, it was a mansion inhabited by a gentleman of that name. My own house was an eyesore, but it was a small eyesore, and it had been overlooked, so I had a view of the water, a partial view of my neighbour's lawn, and the consoling proximity of millionaires – all for eighty dollars a month.

Across the courtesy bay the white palaces of fashionable East Egg¹⁶ glittered along the water, and the history of the summer really begins on the evening I drove over there to have dinner with the Tom Buchanans. Daisy was my second cousin once removed, and I'd known Tom in college. And just after the war I spent two days with them in Chicago.

Her husband, among various physical accomplishments, had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Haven – a national figure in a way, one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterward savours of anti-climax. His family were enormously wealthy – even in college his freedom with money was a matter for reproach – but now he'd left Chicago and come East in a fashion that rather took your breath away: for instance, he'd brought down a string of polo ponies from Lake Forest¹⁷. 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 Colonial¹⁸ mansion, overlooking the bay. The lawn started at the beach and ran toward the front door for a quarter of a mile¹⁹, 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 that seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack

¹² **yards** – *yard* is a unit of length equal to 0.9144 metre

¹³ **Hotel de Ville** = city hall (*French*)

¹⁴ **Normandy** – a historic region in northern France with its own culture, and a long and rich history

¹⁵ **acres** – *acre* is a unit of land measurement equal to 4.047 square metres

¹⁶ **East Egg** – an area of Long Island

¹⁷ **Lake Forest** – a city in Lake county in northeastern Illinois, first settled in 1835

¹⁸ **Georgian Colonial (style)** – various styles in architecture and decorative arts in 1714–1830, between George I and the death of George IV, kings of Great Britain

¹⁹ **mile** – unit of distance equal to 1.609 km

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-coloured space, fragilely bound into the house by French windows at either end. The windows were ajar and gleaming white against the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into the house. A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling, and then rippled over the wine-coloured rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea.

The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house. I must have stood for a few moments listening to the whip and snap of the curtains and the groan of a picture on the wall. Then there was a boom as Tom Buchanan shut the rear windows and the caught wind died out about the room, and the curtains and the rugs and the two young women ballooned slowly to the floor.

The younger of the two was a stranger to me. She was extended full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless, and with her chin raised a little, as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of it – indeed, I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her by coming in.

The other girl, Daisy, made an attempt to rise – she leaned slightly forward with a conscientious expression – then she laughed, an absurd, charming little laugh, and I laughed too and came forward into the room.

‘I’m p-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 three years old. Haven't you ever seen her?'

'Never.'

'Well, you ought to see her. She's —'

Tom Buchanan, who had been hovering restlessly about the room, stopped and rested his hand on my shoulder.

'What you doing, Nick?'

'I'm a bond man.'

'Who with?'

I told him.

'Never heard of them,' he remarked decisively.

This annoyed me.

'You will,' I answered shortly. 'You will if you stay in the East.'

'Oh, I'll stay in the East, don't you worry,' he said glancing at Daisy and then back at me, as if he were alert for something more. 'I'd be a God damned fool to live anywhere else.'

At this point Miss Baker said: 'Absolutely!' with such suddenness that I started – it was the first word she had uttered since I came into the room. Evidently it surprised her as much as it did me, for she yawned and with a series of rapid, deft movements stood up into the room.

'I'm stiff,' she complained, 'I've been lying on that sofa for as long as I can remember.'

'Don't look at me,' Daisy retorted, 'I've been trying to get you to New York all afternoon.'

'No, thanks,' said Miss Baker to the four cocktails just in from the pantry, 'I'm absolutely in training.'

Her host looked at her incredulously.

'You are!' He took down his drink as if it were a drop in the bottom of a glass. 'How you ever get anything done is beyond me.'

I looked at Miss Baker, wondering what it was she 'got done'. I enjoyed looking at her. She was a slender, small-breasted girl, with an erect carriage, which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet. Her grey sun-strained eyes looked back at me with polite reciprocal curiosity out of a wan, charming, discontented face. It occurred to me now that I had seen her, or a picture of her, somewhere before.

'You live in West Egg,' she remarked contemptuously. 'I know somebody there.'

'I don't know a single —'

'You must know Gatsby.'

'Gatsby?' demanded Daisy. 'What Gatsby?'

Before I could reply that he was my neighbour dinner was announced; wedging his tense arm imperatively under mine, Tom Buchanan compelled me from the room as though he were moving a checker to another square.

Slenderly, languidly, their hands set lightly on their hips, the two young women preceded us out on to a rosy-coloured porch, open toward the sunset, where four candles flickered on the table in the diminished wind.

‘Whycandles?’ objected Daisy, frowning. She snapped them out with her fingers. ‘In two weeks it’ll be the longest day in the year.’ She looked at us all radiantly. ‘Do you always watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it? I always watch for the longest day in the year and then miss it.’

‘We ought to plan something,’ yawned Miss Baker, sitting down at the table as if she were getting into bed.

‘All right,’ said Daisy. ‘What’ll we plan?’ She turned to me helplessly: ‘What do people plan?’

Before I could answer her eyes fastened with an awed expression on her little finger.

‘Look!’ she complained; ‘I hurt it.’

We all looked – the knuckle was black and blue.

‘You did it, Tom,’ she said accusingly. ‘I know you didn’t mean to, but you did do it. That’s what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great, big, hulking physical specimen of a —’

‘I hate that word hulking,’ objected Tom crossly, ‘even in kidding.’

‘Hulking,’ insisted Daisy.

Sometimes she and Miss Baker talked at once, unobtrusively and with a bantering inconsequence that was never quite chatter that was as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire. They were here, and they accepted Tom and me, making only a polite pleasant effort to entertain or to be entertained. They knew that presently dinner would be over and a little later the evening too would be over and casually put away. It was sharply different from the West, where an evening was hurried from phase to phase towards its close, in a continually disappointed anticipation or else in sheer nervous dread of the moment itself.

‘You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy,’ I confessed on my second glass of corky but rather impressive claret²⁰. ‘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,’ unthoughtful sadness 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 Nordics²¹. 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 anymore. When, almost immediately, the telephone rang inside and the butler left the porch Daisy seized upon the momentary interruption and leaned toward me.

²⁰ **claret** – red Bordeaux wine from the region of the city of Bordeaux, known since Roman times

²¹ **Nordics, the Nordic race** – Northern European peoples of Scandinavia, Finland and Iceland; a Northern physical type is blond, tall, bony.

'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 neighbour —' I began.

'Don't talk. I want to hear what happens.'

'Is something happening?' I inquired innocently.

'You mean to say you don't know?' said Miss Baker, honestly surprised. 'I thought everybody knew.'

'I don't.'

'Why – ' she said hesitantly, 'Tom's got some woman in New York.'

'Got some woman?' I repeated blankly.

Miss Baker nodded.

'She might have the decency not to telephone him at dinner time. Don't you think?'

Almost before I had grasped her meaning there was the flutter of a dress and the crunch of leather boots, and Tom and Daisy were back at the table.

'It couldn't be helped!' cried Daisy with tense gaiety.

She sat down, glanced searchingly at Miss Baker and then at me, and continued: 'I looked outdoors for a minute, and it's very romantic outdoors. There's a bird on the lawn that I think must be a nightingale come over on the Cunard or White Star Line²². 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

²² **the Cunard or White Star Line** – the Cunard White Star Line Ltd., the first regular Atlantic steamship line between England and North America, founded by Sir Samuel Cunard (1787–1865)

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 feet²³ 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*²⁴ – 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.

²³ **feet** – pl. from *foot* – unit of length equal to 30.48 cm

²⁴ **the Saturday Evening Post** – American weekly journal published in Philadelphia from 1821 till 1969

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 rotogravure²⁵ pictures of the sporting life at Asheville²⁶ and Hot Springs²⁷ and Palm Beach²⁸. 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 Louisville²⁹. Our white girlhood was passed together there. Our beautiful white —'

'Did you give Nick a little heart to heart talk on the veranda?' demanded Tom suddenly.

'Did I?' She looked at me. 'I can't seem to remember, but I think we talked about the Nordic race. Yes, I'm sure we did. It sort of crept up on us and first thing you know –'

'Don't believe everything you hear, Nick,' he advised me.

I said lightly that I had heard nothing at all, and a few minutes later I got up to go home. They came to the door with me and stood side by side in a cheerful square of light. As I started my motor Daisy peremptorily called: 'Wait!

'I forgot to ask you something, and it's important. We heard you were engaged to a girl out West.'

'That's right,' corroborated Tom kindly. 'We heard that you were engaged.'

'It's a libel. I'm too poor.'

'But we heard it,' insisted Daisy, surprising me by opening up again in a flower-like way. 'We heard it from three people, so it must be true.'

Of course I knew what they were referring to, but I wasn't even vaguely engaged. The fact that gossip had published the banns was one of the reasons I had come East. You can't stop going with

²⁵ **rotogravure** – a kind of gravure printed by means of transferring liquid ink from depressions in the printing plate to the paper

²⁶ **Asheville** – a city in the Blue Ridge Mountains in west-central Carolina, first settled in 1794

²⁷ **Hot Springs** – a city and spa resort in central Arkansas

²⁸ **Palm Beach** – a resort town in southeastern Florida

²⁹ **Louisville** – the largest city of Kentucky, first settled in 1773

an old friend on account of rumours, and on the other hand I had no intention of being rumoured into marriage.

Their interest rather touched me and made them less remotely rich – nevertheless, I was confused and a little disgusted as I drove away. It seemed to me that the thing for Daisy to do was to rush out of the house, child in arms – but apparently there were no such intentions in her head. As for Tom, the fact that he ‘had some woman in New York’ was really less surprising than that he had been depressed by a book. Something was making him nibble at the edge of stale ideas as if his sturdy physical egotism no longer nourished his peremptory heart.

Already it was deep summer on roadhouse roofs and in front of wayside garages, where new red petrol-pumps sat out in pools of light and when I reached my estate at West Egg I ran the car under its shed and sat for a while on an abandoned grass roller in the yard. The wind had blown off, leaving a loud, bright night, with wings beating in the trees and a persistent organ sound as the full bellows of the earth blew the frogs full of life. The silhouette of a moving cat wavered across the moonlight, and, turning my head to watch it, I saw that I was not alone – fifty feet away a figure had emerged from the shadow of my neighbour’s mansion and was standing with his hands in his pockets regarding the silver pepper of the stars. Something in his leisurely movements and the secure position of his feet upon the lawn suggested that it was Mr. Gatsby himself, come out to determine what share was his of our local heavens.

I decided to call to him. Miss Baker had mentioned him at dinner, and that would do for an introduction. But I didn’t call to him, for he gave a sudden intimation that he was content to be alone – he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and, far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily I glanced seaward – and distinguished nothing except a single green light, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness.

Chapter II

About half way between West Egg and New York the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile, so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land. This is a valley of ashes – a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of ash-grey men, who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. Occasionally a line of grey cars crawls along an invisible track, gives out a ghastly creak, and comes to rest, and immediately the ash-grey men swarm up with leaden spades and stir up an impenetrable cloud, which screens their obscure operations from your sight.

But above the grey land and the spasms of bleak dust which drift endlessly over it, you perceive, after a moment, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg³⁰. The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are blue and gigantic – their retinas are one yard high. They look out of no face, but, instead, from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles which pass over a non-existent nose. Evidently some wild wag of an oculist set them there to fatten his practice in the borough of Queens, and then sank down himself into eternal blindness, or forgot them and moved away. But his eyes, dimmed a little by many painless 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 cafes with her and, leaving her at a table, sauntered about, chatting with whomsoever he knew. Though I was curious to see her, I had no desire to meet her – but I did. I went up to New York with Tom on the train one afternoon, and when we stopped by the ash heaps he jumped to his feet and taking hold of my elbow, literally forced me from the car.

'We're getting off,' he insisted. 'I want you to meet my girl.'

I think he'd tanked up a good deal at luncheon, and his determination to have my company bordered on violence. The supercilious assumption was that on Sunday afternoon I had nothing better to do.

I followed him over a low whitewashed railroad fence, and we walked back a hundred yards along the road under Doctor Eckleburg's persistent stare. The only building in sight was a small block of yellow brick sitting on the edge of the waste land, a sort of compact Main Street ministering to it, and contiguous to absolutely nothing. One of the three shops it contained was for rent and another was an all-night restaurant approached by a trail of ashes; the third was a garage – *Repairs*. **GEORGE B. WILSON**. *Cars bought and sold*. – and I followed Tom inside.

The interior was unprosperous and bare; the only car visible was the dust-covered wreck of a Ford which crouched in a dim corner. It had occurred to me that this shadow of a garage must be a blind, and that sumptuous and romantic apartments were concealed overhead, when the proprietor himself appeared in the door of an office, wiping his hands on a piece of waste. He was a blond, spiritless man, anaemic, and faintly handsome. When he saw us a damp gleam of hope sprang into his light blue eyes.

'Hello, Wilson, old man,' said Tom, slapping him jovially on the shoulder. 'How's business?'

'I can't complain,' answered Wilson unconvincingly. 'When are you going to sell me that car?'

³⁰ **Doctor T. J. Eckleburg** – the billboard with the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg, an optometrist, erected to promote his business; in the novel, the empty eyes on the billboard became the symbol of the post-war America.

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

‘Works pretty slow, don’t he?’

‘No, he doesn’t,’ said Tom coldly. ‘And if you feel that way about it, maybe I’d better sell it somewhere else after all.’

‘I don’t mean that,’ explained Wilson quickly. ‘I just meant —’

His voice faded off and Tom glanced impatiently around the garage. Then I heard footsteps on a stairs, and in a moment the thickish figure of a woman blocked out the light from the office door. She was in the middle thirties, and faintly stout, but she carried her flesh sensuously as some women can. Her face, above a spotted dress of dark blue crepe-de-chine, contained no facet or gleam of beauty, but there was an immediately perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of her body were continually smouldering. She smiled slowly and, walking through her husband as if he were a ghost, shook hands with Tom, looking him flush in the eye. Then she wet her lips, and without turning around spoke to her husband in a soft, coarse voice:

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

‘Oh, sure,’ agreed Wilson hurriedly, and went toward the little office, mingling immediately with the cement colour of the walls. A white ashen dust veiled his dark suit and his pale hair as it veiled everything in the vicinity – except his wife, who moved close to Tom.

‘I want to see you,’ said Tom intently ‘Get on the next train.’

‘All right.’

‘I’ll meet you by the 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 July³¹, and a grey, scrawny Italian child was setting torpedoes in a row along the railroad track.

‘Terrible place, isn’t it,’ said Tom, exchanging a frown with Doctor Eckleburg.

‘Awful.’

‘It does her good to get away.’

‘Doesn’t her husband object?’

‘Wilson? He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York. He’s so dumb he doesn’t know he’s alive.’

So Tom Buchanan and his girl and I went up together to New York – or not quite together, for Mrs. Wilson sat discreetly in another car. Tom deferred that much to the sensibilities of those East Eggers who might be on the train.

She had changed her dress to a brown figured muslin³², 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*³³ and a moving-picture magazine, and in the station drug-store some cold cream and a small flask of perfume. Upstairs, in the solemn echoing drive she let four taxicabs drive away before she selected a new one, lavender-coloured with grey upholstery, and in this we slid out from the mass of the station into the glowing sunshine. But immediately she turned sharply from the window and, leaning forward, tapped on the front glass.

‘I want to get one of those dogs,’ she said earnestly. ‘I want to get one for the apartment. They’re nice to have – a dog.’

³¹ **the Fourth of July** – Independence Day, the United States national holiday

³² **muslin** – cotton fabric, first made in the city of Mosul in what is now Iraq

³³ **Town Tattle** – the name of a newspaper

We backed up to a grey old man who bore an absurd resemblance to John D. Rockefeller³⁴. In a basket swung from his neck cowered a dozen very recent puppies of an indeterminate breed.

‘What kind are they?’ asked Mrs. Wilson eagerly, as he came to the taxi-window.

‘All kinds. What kind do you want, lady?’

‘I’d like to get one of those police dogs; I don’t suppose you got that kind?’

The man peered doubtfully into the basket, plunged in his hand and drew one up, wriggling, by the back of the neck.

‘That’s no police dog,’ said Tom.

‘No, it’s not exactly a police dog,’ said the man with disappointment in his voice. ‘It’s more of an Airedale.’ He passed his hand over the brown washrag of a back. ‘Look at that coat. Some coat. That’s a dog that’ll never bother you with catching cold.’

‘I think it’s cute,’ said Mrs. Wilson enthusiastically. ‘How much is it?’

‘That dog?’ He looked at it admiringly. ‘That dog will cost you ten dollars.’

The Airedale – undoubtedly there was an Airedale concerned in it somewhere, though its feet were startlingly white – changed hands and settled down into Mrs. Wilson’s lap, where she fondled the weather-proof coat with rapture.

‘Is it a boy or a girl?’ she asked delicately.

‘That dog? That dog’s a boy.’

‘It’s a bitch,’ said Tom decisively. ‘Here’s your money. Go and buy ten more dogs with it.’

We drove over to Fifth Avenue, warm and soft, almost pastoral, on the summer Sunday afternoon. I wouldn’t have been surprised to see a great flock of white sheep turn the corner.

‘Hold on,’ I said, ‘I have to leave you here.’

‘No, you don’t,’ interposed Tom quickly. ‘Myrtle’ll be hurt if you don’t come up to the apartment. Won’t you, Myrtle?’

‘Come on,’ she urged. ‘I’ll telephone my sister Catherine. She’s said to be very beautiful by people who ought to know.’

‘Well, I’d like to, but —’

We went on, cutting back again over the Park toward the West Hundreds³⁵. At 158th Street the cab stopped at one slice in a long white cake of apartment-houses. Throwing a regal homecoming glance around the neighbourhood, Mrs. Wilson gathered up her dog and her other purchases, and went haughtily in.

‘I’m going to have the McKees come up,’ she announced as we rose in the elevator. ‘And, of course, I got to call up my sister, too.’

The apartment was on the top floor – a small living-room, a small dining-room, a small bedroom, and a bath. The living-room was crowded to the doors with a set of tapestried furniture entirely too large for it, so that to move about was to stumble continually over scenes of ladies swinging in the gardens of Versailles³⁶. 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*³⁷, 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

³⁴ **John D. Rockefeller (1839—1937)** – a prominent American industrialist and philanthropist

³⁵ **the West Hundreds** – the hundredth streets in the west of New York City

³⁶ **Versailles** – Palace of Versailles, the former French royal residence, built in 1631–1634 in the city of Versailles in northern France, 16 km west-southwest of Paris

³⁷ **Simon Called Peter** – the name of the popular novel by Robert Keable (1887–1927) of the early 1920s; the title is an allusion to Saint Peter the Apostle whose original name was Simon.

dog-biscuits – one of which decomposed apathetically in the saucer of milk all afternoon. Meanwhile Tom brought out a bottle of whisky from a locked bureau door.

I have been drunk just twice in my life, and the second time was that afternoon; so everything that happened has a dim, hazy cast over it, although until after eight o'clock the apartment was full of cheerful sun. Sitting on Tom's lap Mrs. Wilson called up several people on the telephone; then there were no cigarettes, and I went out to buy some at the drugstore on the corner. When I came back they had both disappeared, so I sat down discreetly in the living-room and read a chapter of *Simon Called Peter* – either it was terrible stuff or the whisky distorted things, because it didn't make any sense to me.

Just as Tom and Myrtle (after the first drink Mrs. Wilson and I called each other by our first names) reappeared, company commenced to arrive at the apartment-door.

The sister, Catherine, was a slender, worldly girl of about thirty, with a solid, sticky bob of red hair, and a complexion powdered milky white. Her eyebrows had been plucked and then drawn on again at a more rakish angle, but the efforts of nature toward the restoration of the old alignment gave a blurred air to her face. When she moved about there was an incessant clicking as innumerable pottery bracelets jingled up and down upon her arms. She came in with such a proprietary haste, and looked around so possessively at the furniture that I wondered if she lived here. But when I asked her she laughed immoderately, repeated my question aloud, and told me she lived with a girl friend at a hotel.

Mr. McKee was a pale, feminine man from the flat below. He had just shaved, for there was a white spot of lather on his cheekbone, and he was most respectful in his greeting to everyone in the room. He informed me that he was in the 'artistic game', and I gathered later that he was a photographer and had made the dim enlargement of Mrs. Wilson's mother which hovered like an ectoplasm on the wall. His wife was shrill, languid, handsome, and horrible. She told me with pride that her husband had photographed her a hundred and twenty-seven times since they had been married.

Mrs. Wilson had changed her costume some time before, and was now attired in an elaborate afternoon dress of cream-coloured chiffon, which gave out a continual rustle as she swept about the room. With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change. The intense vitality that had been so remarkable in the garage was converted into impressive hauteur. Her laughter, her gestures, her assertions became more violently affected moment by moment, and as she expanded the room grew smaller around her, until she seemed to be revolving on a noisy, creaking pivot through the smoky air.

'My dear,' she told her sister in a high, mincing shout, 'most of these fellas will cheat you every time. All they think of is money. I had a woman up here last week to look at my feet, and when she gave me the bill you'd of thought she had my appendicitis out.'

'What was the name of the woman?' asked Mrs. McKee.

'Mrs. Eberhardt. She goes around looking at people's feet in their own homes.'

'I like your dress,' remarked Mrs. McKee, 'I think it's adorable.'

Mrs. Wilson rejected the compliment by raising her eyebrow in disdain.

'It's just a crazy old thing,' she said. 'I just slip it on sometimes when I don't care what I look like.'

'But it looks wonderful on you, if you know what I mean,' pursued Mrs. McKee. 'If Chester could only get you in that pose I think he could make something of it.'

We all looked in silence at Mrs. Wilson, who removed a strand of hair from over her eyes and looked back at us with a brilliant smile. Mr. McKee regarded her intently with his head on one side, and then moved his hand back and forth slowly in front of his face.

'I should change the light,' he said after a moment. 'I'd like to bring out the modeling of the features. And I'd try to get hold of all the back hair.'

'I wouldn't think of changing the light,' cried Mrs. McKee. 'I think it's –'

Her husband said: 'Sh!' and we all looked at the subject again, whereupon Tom Buchanan yawned audibly and got to his feet.

'You McKees have something to drink,' he said. 'Get some more ice and mineral water, Myrtle, before everybody goes to sleep.'

'I told that boy about the ice.' Myrtle raised her eyebrows in despair at the shiftlessness of the lower orders. 'These people! You have to keep after them all the time.'

She looked at me and laughed pointlessly. Then she flounced over to the dog, kissed it with ecstasy, and swept into the kitchen, implying that a dozen chefs awaited her orders there.

'I've done some nice things out on Long Island,' asserted Mr. McKee.

Tom looked at him blankly.

'Two of them we have framed downstairs.'

'Two what?' demanded Tom.

'Two studies. One of them I call "Montauk Point – The Gulls", and the other I call "Montauk Point – The Sea".'

The sister Catherine sat down beside me on the couch.

'Do you live down on Long Island, too?' she inquired.

'I live at West Egg.'

'Really? I was down there at a party about a month ago. At a man named Gatsby's. Do you know him?'

'I live next door to him.'

'Well, they say he's a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm's³⁸. That's where all his money comes from.'

'Really?'

She nodded.

'I'm scared of him. I'd hate to have him get anything on me.'

This absorbing information about my neighbour was interrupted by Mrs. McKee's pointing suddenly at Catherine:

'Chester, I think you could do something with *her*,' she broke out, but Mr. McKee only nodded in a bored way, and turned his attention to Tom.

'I'd like to do more work on Long Island, if I could get the entry. All I ask is that they should give me a start.'

'Ask Myrtle,' said Tom, breaking into a short shout of laughter as Mrs. Wilson entered with a tray. 'She'll give you a letter of introduction, won't you, Myrtle?'

'Do what?' she asked, startled.

'You'll give McKee a letter of introduction to your husband, so he can do some studies of him.' His lips moved silently for a moment as he invented. 'George B. Wilson at the Gasoline Pump,' or something like that.'

Catherine leaned close to me and whispered in my ear:

'Neither of them can stand the person they're married to.'

'Can't they?'

'Can't *stand* them' She looked at Myrtle and then at Tom. 'What I say is, why go on living with them if they can't stand them? If I was them I'd get a divorce and get married to each other right away.'

'Doesn't she like Wilson either?'

The answer to this was unexpected. It came from Myrtle, who had overheard the question, and it was violent and obscene.

'You see,' cried Catherine triumphantly. She lowered her voice again. 'It's really his wife that's keeping them apart. She's a Catholic, and they don't believe in divorce.'

³⁸ **Kaiser Wilhelm** – Wilhelm II (1859–1941), German emperor and King of Prussia till the end of World War I (1918)

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 Carlo³⁹.’

‘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 Marseilles⁴⁰. 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 everyone looked at me accusingly. I tried to show by my expression that I expected no affection.

‘The only crazy I was when I married him. I knew right away I made a mistake. He borrowed somebody’s best suit to get married in, and never even told me about it, and the man came after it one day when he was out: “Oh, is that your suit?” I said. “This is the first I ever heard about it.” But I gave it to him and then I lay down and cried to beat the band all afternoon.’

‘She really ought to get away from him,’ resumed Catherine to me. ‘They’ve been living over that garage for eleven years. And Tom’s the first sweetie she ever had.’

The bottle of whisky – a second one – was now in constant demand by all present, excepting Catherine, who ‘felt just as good on nothing at all’. Tom rang for the janitor and sent him for some celebrated sandwiches, which were a complete supper in themselves. I wanted to get out and walk eastward toward the park through the soft twilight, but each time I tried to go I became entangled in some wild, strident argument which pulled me back, as if with ropes, into my chair. Yet high over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I saw him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.

Myrtle pulled her chair close to mine, and suddenly her warm breath poured over me the story of her first meeting with Tom.

³⁹ **Monte Carlo** – a resort on the French Riviera in Monaco, known for its casino opened in 1861

⁴⁰ **Marseilles** – a city in southern France and one of the major ports on the Mediterranean Sea

‘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 *Ididn’t hardly know* I wasn’t getting into a subway train. All I kept thinking about, over and over, was “You can’t live forever; you can’t live forever.”’

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

‘My dear,’ she cried, ‘I’m going to give you this dress as soon as I’m through with it. I’ve got to get another one to-morrow. I’m going to make a list of all the things I’ve got to get. A massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ash-trays where you touch a spring, and a wreath with a black silk bow for mother’s grave that’ll last all summer. I got to write down a list so I won’t forget all the things I got to do.’

It was nine o’clock – almost immediately afterward I looked at my watch and found it was ten. Mr. McKee was asleep on a chair with his fists clenched in his lap, like a photograph of a man of action. Taking out my handkerchief I wiped from his cheek the spot of dried lather that had worried me all the afternoon.

The little dog was sitting on the table looking with blind eyes through the smoke, and from time to time groaning faintly. People disappeared, reappeared, made plans to go somewhere, and then lost each other, searched for each other, found each other a few feet away. Some time toward midnight Tom Buchanan and Mrs. Wilson stood face to face discussing, in impassioned voices, whether Mrs. Wilson had any right to mention Daisy’s name.

‘Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!’ shouted Mrs. Wilson. ‘I’ll say it whenever I want to! Daisy! Dai —’

Making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand.

Then there were bloody towels upon the bathroom floor, and women’s voices scolding, and high over the confusion a long broken wail of pain. Mr. McKee awoke from his doze and started in a daze toward the door. When he had gone halfway he turned around and stared at the scene – his wife and Catherine scolding and consoling as they stumbled here and there among the crowded furniture with articles of aid, and the despairing figure on the couch, bleeding fluently, and trying to spread a copy of *Town Tattle* over the tapestry scenes of Versailles. Then Mr. McKee turned and continued on out the door. Taking my hat from the chandelier, I followed.

‘Come to lunch some day,’ he suggested, as we groaned down in the elevator.

‘Where?’

‘Anywhere.’

‘Keep your hands off the lever,’ snapped the elevator boy.

‘I beg your pardon,’ said Mr. McKee with dignity, ‘I didn’t know I was touching it.’

‘All right,’ I agreed, ‘I’ll be glad to.’

... I was standing beside his bed and he was sitting up between the sheets, clad in his underwear, with a great portfolio in his hands.

‘Beauty and the Beast... Loneliness... Old Grocery Horse... Brook’n Bridge⁴¹...’

Then I was lying half asleep in the cold lower level of the Pennsylvania Station, staring at the morning *Tribune*⁴², and waiting for the four o’clock train.

⁴¹ **Brook’n Bridge** – Brooklyn Bridge that connects Brooklyn, a borough of New York City, to Manhattan

⁴² **Tribune** – here: the ‘New York Herald Tribune,’ an American daily newspaper

Chapter III

There was music from my neighbour's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On weekends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York – every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb.

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough coloured lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors-d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece affair, but a whole pit full of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colours, and hair bobbed in strange new ways, and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile⁴³. The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter is easier minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath; already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the centre of a group, and then, excited with triumph, glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and colour under the constantly changing light.

Suddenly one of these gypsies, in trembling opal, seizes a cocktail out of the air, dumps it down for courage and, moving her hands like Frisco, dances out alone on the canvas platform. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly for her, and there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news goes around that she is Gilda Gray's understudy from the Follies⁴⁴. 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

⁴³ **Castile** – a historic region in central Spain

⁴⁴ **the Follies** – a popular variety show

the rules of behaviour associated with an amusement park. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission.

I had been actually invited. A chauffeur in a uniform of robin's-egg blue crossed my lawn early that Saturday morning with a surprisingly formal note from his employer: the honour would be entirely Gatsby's, it said, if I would attend his 'little party' that night. He had seen me several times, and had intended to call on me long before, but a peculiar combination of circumstances had prevented it – signed Jay Gatsby, in a majestic hand.

Dressed up in white flannels I went over to his lawn a little after seven, and wandered around rather ill at ease among swirls and eddies of people I didn't know – though here and there was a face I had noticed on the commuting train. I was immediately struck by the number of young Englishmen dotted about; all well dressed, all looking a little hungry, and all talking in low, earnest voices to solid and prosperous Americans. I was sure that they were selling something: bonds or insurance or automobiles. They were at least agonizingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a few words in the right key.

As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host, but the two or three people of whom I asked his whereabouts stared at me in such an amazed way, and denied so vehemently any knowledge of his movements, that I slunk off in the direction of the cocktail table – the only place in the garden where a single man could linger without looking purposeless and alone.

I was on my way to get roaring drunk from sheer embarrassment when Jordan Baker came out of the house and stood at the head of the marble steps, leaning a little backward and looking with contemptuous interest down into the garden.

Welcome or not, I found it necessary to attach myself to someone before I should begin to address cordial remarks to the 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 had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world.

The first supper – there would be another one after midnight – was now being served, and Jordan invited me to join her own party, who were spread around a table on the other side of the garden. There were three married couples and Jordan’s escort, a persistent undergraduate given to violent innuendo, and obviously under the impression that sooner or later Jordan was going to yield him up her person to a greater or lesser degree. Instead of rambling, this party had preserved a dignified homogeneity, and assumed to itself the function of representing the staid nobility of the countryside – East Egg condescending to West Egg and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gaiety.

‘Let’s get out,’ whispered Jordan, after a somehow wasteful and inappropriate half-hour; ‘this is much too polite for me.’

We got up, and she explained that we were going to find the host: I had never met him, she said, and it was making me uneasy. The undergraduate nodded in a cynical, melancholy way.

The bar, where we glanced first, was crowded, but Gatsby was not there. She couldn’t find him from the top of the steps, and he wasn’t on the veranda. On a chance we tried an important-looking door, and walked into a high Gothic⁴⁵ library, paneled 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.’

⁴⁵ **Gothic** – a style in architecture, painting and sculpture in Western and Central Europe from the 12th century to the end of the 16th century

Taking our scepticism for granted, he rushed to the bookcases and returned with Volume One of the *Stoddard Lectures*⁴⁶.

‘See!’ he cried triumphantly. ‘It’s a bona-fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella’s a regular Belasco⁴⁷. 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 banjos⁴⁸ on the lawn.

I was still with Jordan Baker. We were sitting at a table with a man of about my age and a rowdy little girl, who gave way upon the slightest provocation to uncontrollable laughter. I was enjoying myself now. I had taken two finger-bowls of champagne, and the scene had changed before my eyes into something significant, elemental, and profound.

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

‘Your face is familiar,’ he said, politely. ‘Weren’t you in the First Division during the war?’

‘Why, yes. I was in the Twenty-eighth Infantry.’

‘I was in the Sixteenth until June nineteen-eighteen. I knew I’d seen you somewhere before.’

We talked for a moment about some wet, grey little villages in France. Evidently he lived in this vicinity, for he told me that he had just bought a hydroplane, and was going to try it out in the morning.

‘Want to go with me, old sport? Just near the shore along the Sound.’

‘What time?’

‘Any time that suits you best.’

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask his name when Jordan looked around and smiled.

‘Having a gay time now?’ she inquired.

⁴⁶ **Stoddard Lectures** – popular illustrated lectures about various countries by John L. Stoddard (1850–1931)

⁴⁷ **Belasco** – David Belasco (1853–1931), American playwright, theatrical producer and innovator

⁴⁸ **banjos** – *banjo* is a stringed musical instrument of African origin

‘Much better.’ I turned again to my new acquaintance. ‘This is an unusual party for me. I haven’t even seen the host. I live over there – ’ I waved my hand at the invisible hedge in the distance, ‘and this man Gatsby sent over his chauffeur with an invitation.’

For a moment he looked at me as if he failed to understand.

‘I’m Gatsby,’ he said suddenly.

‘What!’ I exclaimed. ‘Oh, I beg your pardon.’

‘I thought you knew, old sport. I’m afraid I’m not a very good host.’

He smiled understandingly – much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced – or seemed to face – the whole eternal world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favour. It understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. Precisely at that point it vanished – and I was looking at an elegant young rough-neck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I’d got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care.

Almost at the moment when Mr. Gatsby identified himself a butler hurried toward him with the information that Chicago was calling him on the wire. He excused himself with a small bow that included each of us in turn.

‘If you want anything just ask for it, old sport,’ he urged me. ‘Excuse me. I will rejoin you later.’

When he was gone I turned immediately to Jordan constrained to assure her of my surprise. I had expected that Mr. Gatsby would be a florid and corpulent person in his middle years.

‘Who is he?’ I demanded. ‘Do you know?’

‘He’s just a man named Gatsby.’

‘Where is he from, I mean? And what does he do?’

‘Now you’re started on the subject,’ she answered with a wan smile. ‘Well, he told me once he was an Oxford man.’

A dim background started to take shape behind him, but at her next remark it faded away.

‘However, I don’t believe it.’

‘Why not?’

‘I don’t know,’ she insisted, ‘I just don’t think he went there.’

Something in her tone reminded me of the other girl’s ‘I think he killed a man’, and had the effect of stimulating my curiosity. I would have accepted without question the information that Gatsby sprang from the swamps of Louisiana or from the lower East Side of New York. That was comprehensible. But young men didn’t – at least in my provincial inexperience I believed they didn’t – drift coolly out of nowhere and buy a palace on Long Island Sound.

‘Anyhow, he gives large parties,’ said Jordan, changing the subject with an urban distaste for the concrete. ‘And I like large parties. They’re so intimate. At small parties there isn’t any privacy.’

There was the boom of a bass drum, and the voice of the orchestra leader rang out suddenly above the echolalia of the garden.

‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ he cried. ‘At the request of Mr. Gatsby we are going to play for you Mr. Vladimir Tostoff’s latest work, which attracted so much attention at Carnegie Hall⁴⁹ last May. If you read the papers you know there was a big sensation.’ He smiled with jovial condescension, and added: ‘Some sensation!’ Where upon everybody laughed.

‘The piece is known,’ he concluded lustily, ‘as “Vladimir Tostoff’s Jazz History of the World.”’

⁴⁹ **Carnegie Hall** – a historic concert hall in New York City, opened in 1891, named for Andrew Carnegie, its founder and first owner

The nature of Mr. Tostoff's composition eluded me, because just as it began my eyes fell on Gatsby, standing alone on the marble steps and looking from one group to another with approving eyes. His tanned skin was drawn attractively tight on his face and his short hair looked as though it were trimmed every day. I could see nothing sinister about him. I wondered if the fact that he was not drinking helped to set him off from his guests, for it seemed to me that he grew more correct as the fraternal hilarity increased. When the 'Jazz History of the World' was over, girls were putting their heads on men's shoulders in a puppyish, convivial way, girls were swooning backward playfully into men's arms, even into groups, knowing that someone would arrest their falls – but no one swooned backward on Gatsby, and no French bob touched Gatsby's shoulder, and no singing quartets were formed for Gatsby's head for one link.

'I beg your pardon.'

Gatsby's butler was suddenly standing beside us.

'Miss Baker?' he inquired. 'I beg your pardon, but Mr. Gatsby would like to speak to you alone.'

'With me?' she exclaimed in surprise.

'Yes, madame.'

She got up slowly, raising her eyebrows at me in astonishment, and followed the butler toward the house. I noticed that she wore her evening-dress, all her dresses, like sports clothes – there was a jauntiness about her movements as if she had first learned to walk upon golf courses on clean, crisp mornings.

I was alone and it was almost two. For some time confused and intriguing sounds had issued from a long, many-windowed room which overhung the terrace. Eluding Jordan's undergraduate, who was now engaged in an obstetrical conversation with two chorus girls, and who implored me to join him, I went inside.

The large room was full of people. One of the girls in yellow was playing the piano, and beside her stood a tall, red-haired young lady from a famous chorus, engaged in song. She had drunk a quantity of champagne, and during the course of her song she had decided, ineptly, that everything was very, very sad – she was not only singing, she was weeping too. Whenever there was a pause in the song she filled it with gasping, broken sobs, and then took up the lyric again in a quavering soprano. The tears coursed down her cheeks – not freely, however, for when they came into contact with her heavily beaded eyelashes they assumed an inky colour, and pursued the rest of their way in slow black rivulets. A humorous suggestion was made that she sing the notes on her face, whereupon she threw up her hands, sank into a chair, and went off into a deep vinous sleep.

'She had a fight with a man who says he's her husband,' explained a girl at my elbow.

I looked around. Most of the remaining women were now having fights with men said to be their husbands. Even Jordan's party, the quartet from East Egg, were rent asunder by dissension. One of the men was talking with curious intensity to a young actress, and his wife, after attempting to laugh at the situation in a dignified and indifferent way, broke down entirely and resorted to flank attacks – at intervals she appeared suddenly at his side like an angry diamond, and hissed: 'You promised!' into his ear.

The reluctance to go home was not confined to wayward men. The hall was at present occupied by two deplorably sober men and their highly indignant wives. The wives were sympathizing with each other in slightly raised voices.

'Whenever he sees I'm having a good time he wants to go home.'

'Never heard anything so selfish in my life.'

'We're always the first ones to leave.'

'So are we.'

'Well, we're almost the last tonight,' said one of the men sheepishly. 'The orchestra left half an hour ago.'

In spite of the wives' agreement that such malevolence was beyond credibility, the dispute ended in a short struggle, and both wives were lifted, kicking, into the night.

As I waited for my hat in the hall the door of the library opened and Jordan Baker and Gatsby came out together. He was saying some last word to her, but the eagerness in his manner tightened abruptly into formality as several people approached him to say goodbye.

Jordan's party were calling impatiently to her from the porch, but she lingered for a moment to shake hands.

'I've just heard the most amazing thing,' she whispered. 'How long were we in there?'

'Why, about an hour.'

'It was... simply amazing,' she repeated abstractedly. 'But I swore I wouldn't tell it and here I am tantalizing you.' She yawned gracefully in my face. 'Please come and see me... Phone book... Under the name of Mrs. Sigourney Howard... My aunt...' She was hurrying off as she talked – her brown hand waved a jaunty salute as she melted into her party at the door.

Rather ashamed that on my first appearance I had stayed so late, I joined the last of Gatsby's guests, who were clustered around him. I wanted to explain that I'd hunted for him early in the evening and to apologize for not having known him in the garden.

'Don't mention it,' he enjoined me eagerly. 'Don't give it another thought, old sport.' The familiar expression held no more familiarity than the hand which reassuringly brushed my shoulder. 'And don't forget we're going up in the hydroplane tomorrow morning, at nine o'clock.'

Then the butler, behind his shoulder:

'Philadelphia wants you on the phone, sir.'

'All right, in a minute. Tell them I'll be right there... Good night.'

'Good night.'

'Good night.' He smiled – and suddenly there seemed to be a pleasant significance in having been among the last to go, as if he had desired it all the time. 'Good night, old sport... Good night.'

But as I walked down the steps I saw that the evening was not quite over. Fifty feet from the door a dozen headlights illuminated a bizarre and tumultuous scene. In the ditch beside the road, right side up, but violently shorn of one wheel, rested a new 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 tyre and from the tyre to the observers in a pleasant, puzzled way.

'See!' he explained. 'It went in the ditch.'

The fact was infinitely astonishing to him, and I recognized first the unusual quality of wonder, and then the man – it was the late patron of Gatsby's library.

'How'd it happen?'

He shrugged his shoulders.

'I know nothing whatever about mechanics,' he said decisively.

'But how did it happen? Did you run into the wall?'

'Don't ask me,' said Owl Eyes, washing his hands of the whole matter. 'I know very little about driving – next to nothing. It happened, and that's all I know.'

'Well, if you're a poor driver you oughtn't to try driving at night.'

'But I wasn't even trying,' he explained indignantly, 'I wasn't even trying.'

An awed hush fell upon the bystanders.

'Do you want to commit suicide?'

'You're lucky it was just a wheel! A bad driver and not even trying!'

'You don't understand,' explained the criminal. 'I wasn't driving. There's another man in the car.'

The shock that followed this declaration found voice in a sustained 'Ah-h-h!' as the door of the 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,' someone explained.

He nodded.

'At first I din' notice we'd stopped.'

A pause. Then, taking a long breath and straightening his shoulders, he remarked in a determined voice:

'Wonder'ff tell me where there's a gas'line station?'

At least a dozen men, some of them a little better off than he was, explained to him that wheel and car were no longer joined by any physical bond.

'Back out,' he suggested after a moment. 'Put her in reverse.'

'But the wheel's off!'

He hesitated.

'No harm in trying,' he said.

The caterwauling horns had reached a crescendo and I turned away and cut across the lawn toward home. I glanced back once. A wafer of a moon was shining over Gatsby's house, making the night fine as before, and surviving the laughter and the sound of his still glowing garden. A sudden emptiness seemed to flow now from the windows and the great doors, endowing with complete isolation the figure of the host, who stood on the porch, his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell.

* * *

Reading over what I have written so far, I see I have given the impression that the events of three nights several weeks apart were all that absorbed me. On the contrary, they were merely casual events in a crowded summer, and, until much later, they absorbed me infinitely less than my personal affairs.

Most of the time I worked. In the early morning the sun threw my shadow westward as I hurried down the white chasms of lower New York to the Probity Trust. I knew the other clerks and young bond-salesmen by their first names, and lunched with them in dark, crowded restaurants on little pig sausages and mashed potatoes and coffee. I even had a short affair with a girl who lived in Jersey City⁵⁰ and worked in the accounting department, but her brother began throwing mean looks in my direction, so when she went on her vacation in July I let it blow quietly away.

I took dinner usually at the Yale Club – for some reason it was the gloomiest event of my day – and then I went upstairs to the library and studied investments and securities for a conscientious hour. There were generally a few rioters around, but they never came into the library, so it was a good place to work. After that, if the night was mellow, I strolled down Madison Avenue past the old Murray Hill Hotel, and over 33rd Street to the Pennsylvania Station.

⁵⁰ **Jersey City** – a city in northeastern New Jersey, located on a peninsula between the Hudson and the Hackensack rivers opposite Manhattan Island

I began to like New York, the racy, adventurous feel of it at night, and the satisfaction that the constant flicker of men and women and machines gives to the restless eye. I liked to walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter into their lives, and no one would ever know or disapprove. Sometimes, in my mind, I followed them to their apartments on the corners of hidden streets, and they turned and smiled back at me before they faded through a door into warm darkness. At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others – poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner – young clerks in the dusk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life.

Again at eight o'clock, when the dark lanes of the Forties were lined five deep with throbbing taxicabs, bound for the theatre district, I felt a sinking in my heart. Forms leaned together in the taxis as they waited, and voices sang, and there was laughter from unheard jokes, and lighted cigarettes made unintelligible circles inside. Imagining that I, too, was hurrying toward gaiety and sharing their intimate excitement, I wished them well.

For a while I lost sight of Jordan Baker, and then in midsummer I found her again. At first I was flattered to go places with her, because she was a golf champion, and everyone knew her name. Then it was something more. I wasn't actually in love, but I felt a sort of tender curiosity. The bored haughty face that she turned to the world concealed something – most affectations conceal something eventually, even though they don't in the beginning – and one day I found what it was. When we were on a house-party together up in Warwick, she left a borrowed car out in the ram with the top down, and then lied about it – and suddenly I remembered the story about her that had eluded me that night at Daisy's. At her first big golf tournament there was a row that nearly reached the newspapers – a suggestion that she had moved her ball from a bad lie in the semi-final round. The thing approached the proportions of a scandal – then died away. A caddy retracted his statement, and the only other witness admitted that he might have been mistaken. The incident and the name had remained together in my mind.

Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever, shrewd men and now I saw that this was because she felt safer on a plane where any divergence from a code would be thought impossible. She was incurably dishonest. She wasn't able to endure being at a disadvantage and given this unwillingness, I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool, insolent smile turned to the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard, jaunty body.

It made no difference to me. Dishonesty in a woman is a thing you never blame deeply – I was casually sorry, and then I forgot. It was on that same house party that we had a curious conversation about driving a car. It started because she passed so close to some workmen that our fender flicked a button on one man's coat.

'You're a rotten driver,' I protested. 'Either you ought to be more careful, or you oughtn't to drive at all.'

'I am careful.'

'No, you're not.'

'Well, other people are,' she said lightly.

'What's that got to do with it?'

'They'll keep out of my way,' she insisted. 'It takes two to make an accident.'

'Suppose you met somebody just as careless as yourself.'

'I hope I never will,' she answered. 'I hate careless people. That's why I like you.'

Her grey, sun-strained eyes stared straight ahead, but she had deliberately shifted our relations, and for a moment I thought I loved her. But I am slow-thinking and full of interior rules that act as brakes on my desires, and I knew that first I had to get myself definitely out of that tangle back home. I'd been writing letters once a week and signing them: 'Love, Nick,' and all I could think of was how,

when that certain girl played tennis, a faint moustache of perspiration appeared on her upper lip. Nevertheless there was a vague understanding *that* had to be tactfully broken off before I was free.

Every one suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known.

Chapter IV

On Sunday morning while church bells rang in the villages alongshore, the world and its mistress returned to Gatsby's house and twinkled hilariously on his lawn.

'He's a bootlegger,' said the young ladies, moving somewhere between his cocktails and his flowers. 'One time he killed a man who had found out that he was nephew to Von Hindenburg⁵¹ and second cousin to the devil. Reach me a rose, honey, and pour me a last drop into that there crystal glass.'

Once I wrote down on the empty spaces of a time-table the names of those who came to Gatsby's house that summer. It is an old time-table now, disintegrating at its folds, and headed 'This schedule in effect July 5th, 1922.' But I can still read the grey names, and they will give you a better impression than my generalities of those who accepted Gatsby's hospitality and paid him the subtle tribute of knowing nothing whatever about him.

From East Egg, then, came the Chester Beckers and the Leeches, and a man named Bunsen, whom I knew at Yale, and Doctor Webster Civet, who was drowned last summer up in Maine⁵². 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'Donovan and Lestel Myer and George Duckweed and Francis Bull. Also from New York were the Chromes and the Backhyssons and the Dennickers and Russel Betty and the Corriganes and the Kellehers and the Dewars and the Scullys and S. W. Belcher and the Smirkes and the young Quinns, divorced now, and Henry L. Palmetto, who killed himself by jumping in front of a subway train in Times Square.

Benny McClenahan arrived always with four girls. They were never quite the same ones in physical person, but they were so identical one with another that it inevitably seemed they had been there before. I have forgotten their names – Jaqueline, I think, or else Consuela, or Gloria or Judy or

⁵¹ **Von Hindenburg** – Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934), German field marshal during World War I and then, in 1925–1934, the second president of Germany (of the so called Weimar Republic)

⁵² **Maine** – the US state in the northeast, one of the original New England states

June, and their last names were either the melodious names of flowers and months or the sterner ones of the great American capitalists whose cousins, if pressed, they would confess themselves to be.

In addition to all these I can remember that Faustina O'Brien came there at least once and the Baedeker girls and young Brewer, who had his nose shot off in the war, and Mr. Albrucksburger and Miss Haag, his fiancée, and Ardita Fitz-Peters and Mr. P. Jewett, once head of the American Legion⁵³, and Miss Claudia Hip, with a man reputed to be her chauffeur, and a prince of something, whom we called Duke, and whose name, if I ever knew it, I have forgotten.

All these people came to Gatsby's house in the summer.

* * *

At nine o'clock, one morning late in July, Gatsby's gorgeous car lurched up the rocky drive to my door and gave out a burst of melody from its three-noted horn. It was the first time he had called on me, though I had gone to two of his parties, mounted in his hydroplane, and, at his urgent invitation, made frequent use of his beach.

'Good morning, old sport. You're having lunch with me today and I thought we'd ride up together.'

He was balancing himself on the dashboard of his car with that resourcefulness of movement that is so peculiarly American – that comes, I suppose, with the absence of lifting work in youth and, even more, with the formless grace of our nervous, sporadic games. This quality was continually breaking through his punctilious manner in the shape of restlessness. He was never quite still, there was always a tapping foot somewhere or the impatient opening and closing of a hand.

He saw me looking with admiration at his car.

'It's pretty, isn't it, old sport?' He jumped off to give me a better view. 'Haven't you ever seen it before?'

I'd seen it. Everybody had seen it. It was a rich cream colour, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hat-boxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrored a dozen suns. Sitting down behind many layers of glass in a sort of green leather conservatory, we started to town.

I had talked with him perhaps half a dozen times in the past month and found, to my disappointment, that he had little to say. So my first impression, that he was a person of some undefined consequence, had gradually faded and he had become simply the proprietor of an elaborate road-house next door.

And then came that disconcerting ride. We hadn't reached West Egg Village before Gatsby began leaving his elegant sentences unfinished and slapping himself indecisively on the knee of his caramel-coloured suit.

'Look here, old sport,' he broke out surprisingly, 'what's your opinion of me, anyhow?'

A little overwhelmed, I began the generalized evasions which that question deserves.

'Well, I'm going to tell you something about my life,' he interrupted. 'I don't want you to get a wrong idea of me from all these stories you hear.'

So he was aware of the bizarre accusations that flavoured conversation in his halls.

'I'll tell you God's truth.' His right hand suddenly ordered divine retribution to stand by. 'I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West – all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.'

He looked at me sideways – and I knew why Jordan Baker had believed he was lying. He hurried the phrase 'educated at Oxford,' or swallowed it, or choked on it, as though it had bothered

⁵³ **American Legion** – organization of United States war veterans, founded in 1919

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 Boulogne⁵⁴.

'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 Forest⁵⁵ I took the remains of my machine-gun battalion so far forward that there was a half mile gap on either side of us where the infantry couldn't advance. We stayed there two days and two nights, a hundred and thirty men with sixteen Lewis guns⁵⁶, 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 Montenegro⁵⁷, 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 Quad⁵⁸ – the man on my left is now the Earl of Doncaster.'

It was a photograph of half a dozen young men in blazers loafing in an archway through which were visible a host of spires. There was Gatsby, looking a little, not much, younger – with a cricket bat in his hand.

Then it was all true. I saw the skins of tigers flaming in his palace on the Grand Canal⁵⁹; I saw him opening a chest of rubies to ease, with their crimson-lighted depths, the gnawings of his broken heart.

⁵⁴ **Bois de Boulogne** – a large park on the Seine River west of Paris, founded in 1852

⁵⁵ **the Argonne Forest** – the place of final battles on the Western front in eastern France during World War I

⁵⁶ **Lewis guns** – machine guns widely used during World War I, invented by Isaac Newton Lewis (1859–1931)

⁵⁷ **Montenegro** – one of the Balkan states on the Adriatic Sea

⁵⁸ **Trinity Quad** – here: Trinity College, founded in 1554

⁵⁹ **the Grand Canal** – the main waterway of Venice

‘I’m going to make a big request of you today,’ he said, pocketing his souvenirs with satisfaction, ‘so I thought you ought to know something about me. I didn’t want you to think I was just some nobody. You see, I usually find myself among strangers because I drift here and there trying to forget the sad 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 Astoria⁶⁰ – only half, for as we twisted among the pillars of the elevated I heard the familiar ‘jug-jug-*spat!*’ of a motorcycle, and a frantic policeman rode alongside.

‘All right, old sport,’ called Gatsby. We slowed down. Taking a white card from his wallet, he waved it before the man’s eyes.

‘Right you are,’ agreed the policeman, tipping his cap. ‘Know you next time, Mr. Gatsby. Excuse me!’

‘What was that?’ I inquired. ‘The picture of Oxford?’

‘I was able to do the commissioner a favour once, and he sends me a Christmas card every year.’

Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders making a constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of nonolfactory money. The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge⁶¹ is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.

A dead man passed us in a hearse heaped with blooms, followed by two carriages with drawn blinds, and by more cheerful carriages for friends. The friends looked out at us with the tragic eyes and short upper lips of south-eastern Europe, and I was glad that the sight of Gatsby’s splendid car was included in their sombre holiday. As we crossed Blackwell’s Island⁶² a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry.

‘Anything can happen now that we’ve slid over this bridge,’ I thought; ‘anything at all...’

Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder.

* * *

Roaring noon. In a well-fanned Forty-second Street cellar I met Gatsby for lunch. Blinking away the brightness of the street outside, my eyes picked him out obscurely in the anteroom, talking to another man.

‘Mr. Carraway, this is my friend Mr. Wolfshiem.’

⁶⁰ **Astoria** – a commercial, industrial and residential area on Long Island

⁶¹ **the Queensboro Bridge** – the bridge over the East River in New York City

⁶² **Blackwell’s Island** – the former name of Roosevelt Island on the East River between the boroughs of Manhattan and Queens in New York City

A small, flat-nosed Jew raised his large head and regarded me with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril. After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half-darkness.

‘So I took one look at him,’ said Mr. Wolfshiem, shaking my hand earnestly, ‘and what do you think I did?’

‘What?’ I inquired politely.

But evidently he was not addressing me, for he dropped my hand and covered Gatsby with his expressive nose.

‘I handed the money to Katspauh and I said: “All right, Katspauh, don’t pay him a penny till he shuts his mouth.” He shut it then and there.’

Gatsby took an arm of each of us and moved forward into the restaurant, whereupon Mr. Wolfshiem swallowed a new sentence he was starting and lapsed into a somnambulatory abstraction.

‘Highballs⁶³’ asked the head waiter.

‘This is a nice restaurant here,’ said Mr. Wolfshiem, looking at the Presbyterian nymphs on the ceiling. ‘But I like across the street better!’

‘Yes, highballs,’ agreed Gatsby, and then to Mr. Wolfshiem: ‘It’s too hot over there.’

‘Hot and small – yes,’ said Mr. Wolfshiem, ‘but full of memories.’

‘What place is that?’ I asked.

‘The old Metropole.’

‘The old Metropole,’ brooded Mr. Wolfshiem gloomily. ‘Filled with faces dead and gone. Filled with friends gone now forever. I can’t forget so long as I live the night they shot Rosy Rosenthal there. It was six of us at the table, and Rosy had eaten and drunk a lot all evening. When it was almost morning the waiter came up to him with a funny look and says somebody wants to speak to him outside. “All right,” says Rosy, and begins to get up, and I pulled him down in his chair.

“Let the bastards come in here if they want you, Rosy, but don’t you, so help me, move outside this room.”

‘It was four o’clock in the morning then, and if we’d of raised the blinds we’d of seen daylight.’

‘Did he go?’ I asked innocently.

‘Sure he went.’ Mr. Wolfshiem’s nose flashed at me indignantly. ‘He turned around in the door and says:

“Don’t let that waiter take away my coffee!” Then he went out on the sidewalk, and they shot him three times in his full belly and drove away.’

‘Four of them were electrocuted,’ I said, remembering.

‘Five, with Beeker.’ His nostrils turned to me in an interested way. ‘I understand you’re looking for a business gonnection.’

The juxtaposition of these two remarks was startling. Gatsby answered for me:

‘Oh, no,’ he exclaimed, ‘this isn’t the man.’

‘No?’ Mr. Wolfshiem seemed disappointed.

‘This is just a friend. I told you we’d talk about that some other time.’

‘I beg your pardon,’ said Mr. Wolfshiem, ‘I had a wrong man.’

A succulent hash arrived, and Mr. Wolfshiem, forgetting the more sentimental atmosphere of the old Metropole, began to eat with ferocious delicacy. His eyes, meanwhile, roved very slowly all around the room – he completed the arc by turning to inspect the people directly behind. I think that, except for my presence, he would have taken one short glance beneath our own table.

‘Look here, old sport,’ said Gatsby, leaning toward me, ‘I’m afraid I made you a little angry this morning in the car.’

There was the smile again, but this time I held out against it.

⁶³ **highballs** – *highball* is a cocktail of whisky mixed with soda and ice, served in a tall glass

‘I don’t like mysteries,’ I answered, ‘and I don’t understand why you won’t come out frankly and tell me what you want. Why has it all got to come through Miss Baker?’

‘Oh, it’s nothing underhand,’ he assured me. ‘Miss Baker’s a great sportswoman, you know, and she’d never do anything that wasn’t all right.’

Suddenly he looked at his watch, jumped up, and hurried from the room, leaving me with Mr. Wolfshiem at the table.

‘He has to telephone,’ said Mr. Wolfshiem, following him with his eyes. ‘Fine fellow, isn’t he? Handsome to look at and a perfect gentleman.’

‘Yes.’

‘He’s an Oggsford man.’

‘Oh!’

‘He went to Oggsford College in England. You know Oggsford College?’

‘I’ve heard of it.’

‘It’s one of the most famous colleges in the world.’

‘Have you known Gatsby for a long time?’ I inquired.

‘Several years,’ he answered in a gratified way. ‘I made the pleasure of his acquaintance just after the war. But I knew I had discovered a man of fine breeding after I talked with him an hour. I said to myself: “There’s the kind of man you’d like to take home and introduce to your mother and sister.”’ He paused. ‘I see you’re looking at my cuff buttons.’

I hadn’t been looking at them, but I did now. They were composed of oddly familiar pieces of ivory.

‘Finest specimens of human molars,’ he informed me.

‘Well!’ I inspected them. ‘That’s a very interesting idea.’

‘Yeah.’ He flipped his sleeves up under his coat. ‘Yeah, Gatsby’s very careful about women. He would never so much as look at a friend’s wife.’

When the subject of this instinctive trust returned to the table and sat down Mr. Wolfshiem drank his coffee with a jerk and got to his feet.

‘I have enjoyed my lunch,’ he said, ‘and I’m going to run off from you two young men before I outstay my welcome.’

‘Don’t hurry, Meyer,’ said Gatsby, without enthusiasm. Mr. Wolfshiem raised his hand in a sort of benediction.

‘You’re very polite, but I belong to another generation,’ he announced solemnly. ‘You sit here and discuss your sports and your young ladies and your –’ He supplied an imaginary noun with another wave of his hand. ‘As for me, I am fifty years old, and I won’t impose myself on you any longer.’

As he shook hands and turned away his tragic nose was trembling. I wondered if I had said anything to offend him.

‘He becomes very sentimental sometimes,’ explained Gatsby. ‘This is one of his sentimental days. He’s quite a character around New York – a denizen of Broadway.’

‘Who is he, anyhow, an actor?’

‘No.’

‘A dentist?’

‘Meyer Wolfshiem? No, he’s a gambler.’ Gatsby hesitated, then added coolly: ‘He’s the man who fixed the World’s Series⁶⁴ 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

⁶⁴ **the World’s Series** – baseball championship of the two professional leagues: the American League and the National League; first held in 1903.

end of some inevitable chain. It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people – with the single – mindedness of a burglar blowing a safe.

‘How did he happen to do that?’ I asked after a minute.

‘He just saw the opportunity.’

‘Why isn’t he in jail?’

‘They can’t get him, old sport. He’s a smart man.’

I insisted on paying the check. As the waiter brought my change I caught sight of Tom Buchanan across the crowded room.

‘Come along with me for a minute,’ I said; ‘I’ve got to say hello to someone.’

When he saw us Tom jumped up and took half a dozen steps in our direction.

‘Where’ve you been?’ he demanded eagerly. ‘Daisy’s furious because you haven’t called up.’

‘This is Mr. Gatsby, Mr. Buchanan.’

They shook hands briefly, and a strained, unfamiliar look of embarrassment came over Gatsby’s face.

‘How’ve you been, anyhow?’ demanded Tom of me.

‘How’d you happen to come up this far to eat?’

‘I’ve been having lunch with Mr. Gatsby.’

I turned toward Mr. Gatsby, but he was no longer there.

* * *

One October day in nineteen-seventeen —

(said Jordan Baker that afternoon, sitting up very straight on a straight chair in the tea-garden at the Plaza Hotel)

– I was walking along from one place to another, half on the sidewalks and half on the lawns. I was happier on the lawns because I had on shoes from England with rubber nobs on the soles that bit into the soft ground. I had on a new plaid skirt also that blew a little in the wind, and whenever this happened the red, white, and blue banners in front of all the houses stretched out stiff and said *tut-tut-tut*, in a disapproving way.

The largest of the banners and the largest of the lawns belonged to Daisy Fay’s house. She was just eighteen, two years older than me, and by far the most popular of all the young girls in Louisville. She dressed in white, and had a little white roadster, and all day long the telephone rang in her house and excited young officers from Camp Taylor demanded the privilege of monopolizing her that night. ‘Anyways, for an hour!’

When I came opposite her house that morning her white roadster was beside the curb, and she was sitting in it with a lieutenant I had never seen before. They were so engrossed in each other that she didn’t see me until I was five feet away.

‘Hello, Jordan,’ she called unexpectedly. ‘Please come here.’

I was flattered that she wanted to speak to me, because of all the older girls I admired her most. She asked me if I was going to the Red Cross and make bandages. I was. Well, then, would I tell them that she couldn’t come that day? The officer looked at Daisy while she was speaking, in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at sometime, and because it seemed romantic to me I have remembered the incident ever since. His name was Jay Gatsby, and I didn’t lay eyes on him again for over four years – even after I’d met him on Long Island I didn’t realize it was the same man.

That was nineteen-seventeen.

By the next year I had a few beaux myself, and I began to play in tournaments, so I didn’t see Daisy very often. She went with a slightly older crowd – when she went with anyone at all. Wild rumours were circulating about her – how her mother had found her packing her bag one winter night to go to New York and say goodbye to a soldier who was going overseas. She was effectually

prevented, but she wasn't on speaking terms with her family for several weeks. After that she didn't play around with the soldiers any more, but only with a few flat-footed, shortsighted young men in town, who couldn't get into the army at all.

By the next autumn she was gay again, gay as ever. She had a 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 Muhlbach Hotel, and the day before the wedding he gave her a string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

I was a bridesmaid. I came into her room half an hour before the bridal dinner, and found her lying on her bed as lovely as the June night in her flowered dress – and as drunk as a monkey. She had a bottle of Sauterne⁶⁵ in one hand and a letter in the other.

‘Gratulate me,’ she muttered. ‘Never had a drink before, but oh how I do enjoy it.’

‘What’s the matter, Daisy?’

I was scared, I can tell you; I’d never seen a girl like that before.

‘Here, deares’. She groped around in a waste-basket she had with her on the bed and pulled out the string of pearls. ‘Take ’em downstairs and give ’em back to whoever they belong to. Tell ’em all Daisy’s change’ her mine. Say: “Daisy’s change’ her mine!”

She began to cry – she cried and cried. I rushed out and found her mother’s maid, and we locked the door and got her into a cold bath. She wouldn’t let go of the letter. She took it into the tub with her and squeezed it up into a wet ball, and only let me leave it in the soap-dish when she saw that it was coming to pieces like snow.

But she didn’t say another word. We gave her spirits of ammonia and put ice on her forehead and hooked her back into her dress, and half an hour later, when we walked out of the room, the pearls were around her neck and the incident was over. Next day at five o’clock she married Tom Buchanan without so much as a shiver, and started off on a three months’ trip to the South Seas⁶⁶.

I saw them in Santa Barbara⁶⁷ 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 Ventura⁶⁸ 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 Cannes⁶⁹, and later in Deauville⁷⁰, 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,

⁶⁵ **Sauterne** – natural sweet wine from the district of Sauterne in France

⁶⁶ **the South Seas** – a part of the Pacific Ocean where the Marquesas Islands, Tahiti, Hawaii, Samoa and the Gilbert Islands are located

⁶⁷ **Santa Barbara** – a city on the Pacific Coast in southwestern California, founded in 1602 and named for the patron saint of mariners

⁶⁸ **Ventura** – a city on the Pacific Coast in southern California, founded in 1782

⁶⁹ **Cannes** – a resort city on the French Riviera in southeastern France

⁷⁰ **Deauville** – a fashionable resort in northern France

you can time any little irregularity of your own so that everybody else is so blind that they don't see or care. Perhaps Daisy never went in for amour at all – and yet there's something in that voice of hers...

Well, about six weeks ago, she heard the name Gatsby for the first time in years. It was when I asked you – do you remember? – if you knew Gatsby in West Egg. After you had gone home she came into my room and woke me up, and said 'What Gatsby?' and when I described him – I was half asleep – she said in the strangest voice that it must be the man she used to know. It wasn't until then that I connected this Gatsby with the officer in her white car.

* * *

When Jordan Baker had finished telling all this we had left the Plaza for half an hour and were driving in a victoria through Central Park. The sun had gone down behind the tall apartments of the movie stars in the West Fifties, and the clear voices of children, already gathered like crickets on the grass, rose through the hot twilight:

'I'm the Sheik of Araby.
Your love belongs to me.
At night when you're asleep
Into your tent I'll creep —'

'It was a strange coincidence,' I said.

'But it wasn't a coincidence at all.'

'Why not?'

'Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay.'

Then it had not been merely the stars to which he had aspired on that June night. He came alive to me, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendour.

'He wants to know,' continued Jordan, 'if you'll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over.'

The modesty of the demand shook me. He had waited five years and bought a mansion where he dispensed starlight to casual moths – so that he could 'come over' some afternoon to a stranger's garden.

'Did I have to know all this before he could ask such a little thing?'

'He's afraid, he's waited so long. He thought you might be offended. You see, he's regular tough underneath it all.'

Something worried me.

'Why didn't he ask you to arrange a meeting?'

'He wants her to see his house,' she explained. 'And your house is right next door.'

'Oh!'

'I think he half expected her to wander into one of his parties, some night,' went on Jordan, 'but she never did. Then he began asking people casually if they knew her, and I was the first one he found. It was that night he sent for me at his dance, and you should have heard the elaborate way he worked up to it. Of course, I immediately suggested a luncheon in New York – and I thought he'd go mad:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «Литрес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на Литрес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.