

The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald

CHAPTER 5

When I came home to West Egg that night I was afraid for a moment that my house was on fire. Two o'clock and the whole corner of the peninsula was blazing with light, which fell unreal on the shrubbery and made thin elongating glints upon the roadside wires. Turning a corner, I saw that it was Gatsby's house, lit from tower to cellar.

At first I thought it was another party, a wild rout that had resolved itself into "hide-and-go-seek" or "sardines-in-the-box" with all the house thrown open to the game. But there wasn't a sound. Only wind in the trees, which blew the wires and made the lights go off and on again as if the house had winked into the darkness. As my taxi groaned away I saw Gatsby walking toward me across his lawn.

"Your place looks like the World's Fair," I said.

"Does it?" He turned his eyes toward it absently. "I have been glancing into some of the rooms. Let's go to Coney Island, old sport. In my car."

"It's too late."

"Well, suppose we take a plunge in the swimming-pool? I haven't made use of it all summer."

"I've got to go to bed."

"All right."

He waited, looking at me with suppressed eagerness.

"I talked with Miss Baker," I said after a moment. "I'm going to call up Daisy to-morrow and invite her over here to tea."

"Oh, that's all right," he said carelessly. "I don't want to put you to any trouble."

"What day would suit you?"

"What day would suit *you*?" he corrected me quickly. "I don't want to put you to any trouble, you see."

"How about the day after to-morrow?" He considered for a moment. Then, with reluctance:

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Synopsis of Chapter 5

Nick returns home and finds Gatsby's house 'lit from tower to cellar', has a conversation with Gatsby in which they arrange the meeting with Daisy and refuses to accept a business offer which he sees as being in return for bringing Daisy to Gatsby. He describes himself as 'light-headed and happy', presumably because he has kissed Jordan. Nick invites Daisy to tea and she happily agrees to leave her husband behind and in ignorance of the meeting.

Before Daisy arrives, Gatsby is a nervous wreck and almost abandons the whole meeting. He pretends to arrive after Daisy, and their initial meeting is strained and tense, verging on the hysterical, with Nick noting that, 'it wasn't a bit funny'. Nick leaves them for half an hour and when he returns they are reunited and highly emotional.

They all go to Gatsby's house so that Gatsby can show Daisy his wealth. He demonstrates the excess of his life, numerous rooms in various styles, and then his own apartment, with his bedroom 'the simplest room of all'. Here Daisy brushes her hair and examines his 'stacks' of clothing. She is so impressed with his shirts that she cries. They listen to music played by 'the boarder' Ewing Klipspringer and then Nick observes that Gatsby seems bewildered, possibly doubtful of Daisy, as she is now a reality, although Daisy's voice reignites the emotion. Nick leaves the two together at the end of the chapter.

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Chapter 5 introduces the heart of the matter: Gatsby's dream of Daisy. Through Nick, Gatsby is brought face-to-face with the fulfillment of a dream that he has pursued relentlessly for the past five years of his life. Everything he has done has been, in some sense, tied to his pursuit of Daisy. In a sense, Daisy's and Gatsby's ...

Commented [2]:

I was afraid for a moment that my house was on fire - Nick realises that the 'blazing' light is actually Gatsby's excessive illumination of his own house, but the element of fear and alarm is notable. The silence and intermittent light 'as if the house had winked into the darkness' is almost ghostly and Nick experiences it as 'unreal'. The image of the blaze and Gatsby's suggestion of a 'plunge in the swimming-pool' foreshadow the tragic outcome of his pursuit of Daisy.

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The idea of what's real, unreal and surreal

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The chapter opens as Nick returns home, only to find Gatsby's house "lit from tower to cellar," with no party in sight, only Gatsby "glancing into some of the rooms." In an attempt to calm Gatsby's apparent restlessness, Nick tells him he will phone Daisy and invite her to tea. Gatsby, still trying to play it cool, casually remarks "Oh, that's all right." Nick, who now knows a great deal more about how Gatsby functions (and the fact he has spent the last five years of his life chasing a dream), insists on pinning Gatsby down to a date. Gatsby, trying to show his appreciation, suggests he line Nick up with some d ...

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Significance of the pool

"I want to get the grass cut," he said.

We both looked at the grass — there was a sharp line where my ragged lawn ended and the darker, well-kept expanse of his began. I suspected that he meant my grass.

"There's another little thing," he said uncertainly, and hesitated.

"Would you rather put it off for a few days?" I asked.

"Oh, it isn't about that. At least ——" He fumbled with a series of beginnings. "Why, I thought — why, look here, old sport, you don't make much money, do you?"

"Not very much."

This seemed to reassure him and he continued more confidently.

"I thought you didn't, if you'll pardon my — You see, I carry on a little business on the side, a sort of side line, you understand. And I thought that if you don't make very much — You're selling bonds, aren't you, old sport?"

"Trying to."

"Well, this would interest you. It wouldn't take up much of your time and you might pick up a nice bit of money. It happens to be a rather confidential sort of thing."

I realize now that under different circumstances that conversation might have been one of the crises of my life. But, because the offer was obviously and tactlessly for a service to be rendered, I had no choice except to cut him off there.

"I've got my hands full," I said. "I'm much obliged but I couldn't take on any more work."

"You wouldn't have to do any business with Wolfsheim." Evidently he thought that I was shying away from the "gonnegtion" mentioned at lunch, but I assured him he was wrong. He waited a moment longer, hoping I'd begin a conversation, but I was too absorbed to be responsive, so he went unwillingly home.

The evening had made me light-headed and happy; I think I walked into a deep sleep as I entered my front door. So I didn't know whether or not Gatsby went to Coney Island, or for how many hours he "glanced into rooms" while his house blazed gaudily on. I called up Daisy from the office next morning, and invited her to come to tea.

"Don't bring Tom," I warned her.

"What?"

"Don't bring Tom."

"Who is 'Tom'?" she asked innocently.

Commented [6]:

On the day of the appointed visit, Gatsby arrives an hour in advance, giving us our first glimpse of his vulnerability. Wanting to make sure every detail of his meeting is perfect (meaning it measures up to his dream) Gatsby has Nick's grass cut and has "a greenhouse" of flowers delivered prior to Daisy's arrival. Gatsby dresses for the event in a "white flannel suit, silver shirt, a gold-colored tie." His clothes, like his parties, his house, and his car, are an overt reminder of his newly earned wealth. It is as if he wants to make sure Daisy does not miss the fact that he now has that one thing that eluded him before: money.

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What is this business?

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Who is 'Tom'? - Daisy colludes with Nick, although she doesn't know what he is planning. She asks Nick later if he is in love with her, and plays along with his mock-gothic, 'That's the secret of Castle Rackrent...'

The day agreed upon was **pouring rain**. At eleven o'clock a man in a raincoat, dragging a lawn-mower, tapped at my front door and said that Mr. Gatsby had sent him over to cut my grass. This reminded me that I had forgotten to tell my Finn to come back, so I drove into West Egg Village to search for her among soggy, whitewashed alleys and to buy some cups and lemons and flowers.

The flowers were unnecessary, for at two o'clock a greenhouse arrived from Gatsby's, with innumerable receptacles to contain it. An hour later the front door opened nervously, and **Gatsby, in a white flannel suit, silver shirt, and gold-colored tie, hurried in. He was pale, and there were dark signs of sleeplessness beneath his eyes.**

"Is everything all right?" he asked immediately.

"The grass looks fine, if that's what you mean."

"What grass?" he inquired blankly. "Oh, the grass in the yard." He looked out the window at it, but, judging from his expression, I don't believe he saw a thing.

"Looks very good," he remarked vaguely. "One of the papers said they thought the rain would stop about four. I think it was the *Journal*. Have you got everything you need in the shape of — of tea?"

I took him into the pantry, where he looked a little reproachfully at the Finn. Together we scrutinized the twelve lemon cakes from the delicatessen shop.

"Will they do?" I asked.

"Of course, of course! They're fine!" and he added hollowly, "... old sport."

The rain cooled about half-past three to a damp mist, through which occasional thin drops swam like dew. Gatsby looked with vacant eyes through a copy of Clay's *Economics*, starting at the Finnish tread that shook the kitchen floor, and peering toward the bleared windows from time to time as if a series of invisible but alarming happenings were taking place outside. Finally he got up and informed me, in an uncertain voice, that he was going home.

"Why's that?"

"Nobody's coming to tea. It's too late!" He looked at his watch as if there was some pressing demand on his time elsewhere. "I can't wait all **day**."

"Don't be silly; it's just two minutes to **four**."

Commented [9]:

When Gatsby arrives, for the first time he shows his vulnerability and uncertainty. Up to this point, he has been collected in every situation, but when facing the biggest challenge he's faced in years, his sulking, self-conscious behavior is nearly embarrassing — the generally graceful man stammers in fright, not unlike a young boy. For the first time, Jay Gatsby seems unsure of himself.

He sat down miserably, as if I had pushed him, and simultaneously there was the sound of a motor turning into my lane. We both jumped up, and, a little harrowed myself, I went out into the yard.

Under the dripping bare lilac-trees a large open car was coming up the drive. It stopped. Daisy's face, tipped sideways beneath a three-cornered lavender hat, looked out at me with a bright ecstatic smile.

"Is this absolutely where you live, my dearest one?"

The exhilarating ripple of her voice was a wild tonic in the rain. I had to follow the sound of it for a moment, up and down, with my ear alone, before any words came through. A damp streak of hair lay like a dash of blue paint across her cheek, and her hand was wet with glistening drops as I took it to help her from the car.

"Are you in love with me," she said low in my ear, "or why did I have to come alone?"

"That's the secret of Castle Rackrent. Tell your chauffeur to go far away and spend an hour."

"Come back in an hour, Ferdie." Then in a grave murmur: "His name is Ferdie."

"Does the gasoline affect his nose?"

"I don't think so," she said innocently. "Why?"

We went in. To my overwhelming surprise the living-room was deserted.

"Well, that's funny," I exclaimed.

"What's funny?"

She turned her head as there was a light dignified knocking at the front door. I went out and opened it. Gatsby, pale as death, with his hands plunged like weights in his coat pockets, was standing in a puddle of water glaring tragically into my eyes.

With his hands still in his coat pockets he stalked by me into the hall, turned sharply as if he were on a wire, and disappeared into the living-room. It wasn't a bit funny. Aware of the loud beating of my own heart I pulled the door to against the increasing rain.

For half a minute there wasn't a sound. Then from the living-room I heard a sort of choking murmur and part of a laugh, followed by Daisy's voice on a clear artificial note:

"I certainly am awfully glad to see you again."

A pause; it endured horribly. I had nothing to do in the hall, so I went into the room.

Commented [10]:
Daisy's voice

Commented [11]:
Gatsby, pale as death ... glaring tragically into my eyes.
- Gatsby has disappeared from Nick's living-room and reappeared on his doorstep in order to pretend nonchalance, and the language is heavy with ominous references. The description of Daisy and Gatsby's meeting verges in this way on the comic, and even becomes farcical, as Gatsby is rendered helplessly clumsy and Nick makes some ridiculous comments. None of the characters are amused, but rather they are tortured and overwhelmed by the emotions of this event. Gatsby almost falls down his own stairs as he is so 'dazed' by the presence of Daisy, and this might be interpreted as a hint of his 'fall' later in the novel.

Gatsby, his hands still in his pockets, was reclining against the mantelpiece in a strained counterfeit of perfect ease, even of boredom. His head leaned back so far that it rested against the face of a defunct mantelpiece clock, and from this position his distraught eyes stared down at Daisy, who was sitting, frightened but graceful, on the edge of a stiff chair.

“We’ve met before,” muttered Gatsby. His eyes glanced momentarily at me, and his lips parted with an abortive attempt at a laugh. Luckily the clock took this moment to tilt dangerously at the pressure of his head, whereupon he turned and caught it with trembling fingers, and set it back in place. Then he sat down, rigidly, his elbow on the arm of the sofa and his chin in his hand.

“I’m sorry about the clock,” he said.

My own face had now assumed a deep tropical burn. I couldn’t muster up a single commonplace out of the thousand in my head.

“It’s an old clock,” I told them **idiotically**.

I think we all believed for a moment that it had smashed in pieces on the floor.

“We haven’t met for many years,” said Daisy, her voice as matter-of-fact as it could ever be.

“**Five years next November.**”

The automatic quality of Gatsby’s answer set us all back at least another minute. I had them both on their feet with the desperate suggestion that they help me make tea in the kitchen when the demoniac Finn brought it in on a tray.

Amid the welcome confusion of cups and cakes a certain physical decency established itself. Gatsby got himself into a shadow and, while Daisy and I talked, looked conscientiously from one to the other of us with tense, unhappy eyes. However, as calmness wasn’t an end in itself, I made an excuse at the first possible moment, and got to my feet.

“Where are you going?” demanded Gatsby in immediate alarm.

“I’ll be back.”

“I’ve got to speak to you about something before you go.”

He followed me wildly into the kitchen, closed the door, and whispered:

“Oh, God!” in a miserable way.

“What’s the matter?”

Commented [12]:

At one point, in his nervousness, he knocks a broken clock off the mantel, catching it just before it hits the ground. The symbolic nature of this act cannot be overlooked. Although on one level it is just another awkward incident caused by Gatsby’s nervousness, it goes beyond that. The fact the clock is stopped is significant. In a sense, the clock stopped at a specific point in time, trapped there forever, just as Gatsby’s life, in many regards, stopped when he was hit with the realization that while he was poor, he could never have Daisy. Gatsby is, in essence, trapped by his dreams of ideal love with Daisy, just as the clock is trapped in that exact moment when it stopped working. Following this analysis through to its final conclusion, one must wonder if Fitzgerald isn’t also trying to say that Gatsby’s dream stopped his growth in some respects (specifically emotionally); he’s been so busy chasing a dream rather than enjoying reality, that like the clock, he is frozen in time.

"This is a terrible mistake," he said, shaking his head from side to side, "a terrible, terrible mistake."

"You're just embarrassed, that's all," and luckily I added: "Daisy's embarrassed too."

"She's embarrassed?" he repeated incredulously.

"Just as much as you are."

"Don't talk so loud."

"You're acting like a little boy," I broke out impatiently. "Not only that, but you're rude. Daisy's sitting in there all alone."

He raised his hand to stop my words, looked at me with unforgettable reproach, and, opening the door cautiously, went back into the other room.

I walked out the back way — just as Gatsby had when he had made his nervous circuit of the house half an hour before — and ran for a huge black knotted tree, whose massed leaves made a fabric against the rain. Once more it was pouring, and my irregular lawn, well-shaved by Gatsby's gardener, abounded in small, muddy swamps and prehistoric marshes. There was nothing to look at from under the tree except Gatsby's enormous house, so I stared at it, like Kant at his church steeple, for half an hour. A brewer had built it early in the "period" craze, a decade before, and there was a story that he'd agreed to pay five years' taxes on all the neighboring cottages if the owners would have their roofs thatched with straw. Perhaps their refusal took the heart out of his plan to Found a Family — he went into an immediate decline. His children sold his house with the black wreath still on the door. Americans, while occasionally willing to be serfs, have always been obstinate about being peasantry.

After half an hour, the sun shone again, and the grocer's automobile rounded Gatsby's drive with the raw material for his servants' dinner — I felt sure he wouldn't eat a spoonful. A maid began opening the upper windows of his house, appeared momentarily in each, and, leaning from a large central bay, spat meditatively into the garden. It was time I went back. While the rain continued it had seemed like the murmur of their voices, rising and swelling a little now and then with gusts of emotion. But in the new silence I felt that silence had fallen within the house too.

I went in — after making every possible noise in the kitchen, short of pushing over the stove — but I don't believe they heard a sound. They were sitting at either end of the couch, looking at each other as if some question had been asked, or was in the air, and every vestige of embarrassment was gone. Daisy's face was smeared with tears, and

when I came in she jumped up and began wiping at it with her handkerchief before a mirror. But there was a change in Gatsby that was simply confounding. He literally glowed; without a word or a gesture of exultation a new well-being radiated from him and filled the little room.

“Oh, hello, old sport,” he said, as if he hadn’t seen me for years. I thought for a moment he was going to shake hands.

“It’s stopped raining.”

“Has it?” When he realized what I was talking about, that there were twinkle-bells of sunshine in the room, he smiled like a weather man, like an ecstatic patron of recurrent light, and repeated the news to Daisy. “What do you think of that? It’s stopped raining.”

“I’m glad, Jay.” Her throat, full of aching, grieving beauty, told only of her unexpected joy.

“I want you and Daisy to come over to my house,” he said, “I’d like to show her around.”

“You’re sure you want me to come?”

“Absolutely, old sport.”

Daisy went up-stairs to wash her face — too late I thought with humiliation of my towels — while Gatsby and I waited on the lawn.

“My house looks well, doesn’t it?” he demanded. “See how the whole front of it catches the light.”

I agreed that it was splendid.

“Yes.” His eyes went over it, every arched door and square tower. “It took me just three years to earn the money that bought it.”

“I thought you inherited your money.”

“I did, old sport,” he said automatically, “but I lost most of it in the big panic — the panic of the war.”

I think he hardly knew what he was saying, for when I asked him what business he was in he answered, “That’s my affair,” before he realized that it wasn’t the appropriate reply.

“Oh, I’ve been in several things,” he corrected himself. “I was in the drug business and then I was in the oil business. But I’m not in either one now.” He looked at me with more attention. “Do you mean you’ve been thinking over what I proposed the other night?”

Commented [13]:

He literally glowed... well-being radiated from him ... an ecstatic patron of recurrent light - The transformation of Gatsby, once he is reunited with Daisy, is profound, and recalls the earlier imagery of blazing light in this chapter. Gatsby’s comment on his house at this point, ‘See how the whole front of it catches the light’, also echoes this image.

There are several narrative loops in this chapter: Gatsby begins to talk about a ‘gonnection’ that he mentioned in the previous chapter. The house is associated with ‘ghostly’ visitors. Owl Eyes is imagined laughing as the door to the ‘Merton College Library’ closes, possibly mocking the illusion that Gatsby has created.

Before I could answer, Daisy came out of the house and two rows of brass buttons on her dress gleamed in the sunlight.

“That huge place *there*?” she cried pointing.

“Do you like it?”

“I love it, but I don’t see how you live there all alone.”

“I keep it always full of interesting people, night and day. People who do interesting things. Celebrated people.”

Instead of taking the short cut along the Sound we went down the road and entered by the big postern. With enchanting murmurs Daisy admired this aspect or that of the feudal silhouette against the sky, admired the gardens, the sparkling odor of jonquils and the frothy odor of hawthorn and plum blossoms and the pale gold odor of kiss-me-at-the-gate. It was strange to reach the marble steps and find no stir of bright dresses in and out the door, and hear no sound but bird voices in the trees.

And inside, as we wandered through Marie Antoinette music-rooms and Restoration salons, I felt that there were guests concealed behind every couch and table, under orders to be breathlessly silent until we had passed through. As Gatsby closed the door of “the Merton College Library.” I could have sworn I heard the owl-eyed man break into ghostly laughter.

We went up-stairs, through period bedrooms swathed in rose and lavender silk and vivid with new flowers, through dressing-rooms and poolrooms, and bathrooms with sunken baths — intruding into one chamber where a dishevelled man in pajamas was doing liver exercises on the floor. It was Mr. Klipspringer, the “boarder.” I had seen him wandering hungrily about the beach that morning. Finally we came to Gatsby’s own apartment, a bedroom and a bath, and an Adam study, where we sat down and drank a glass of some Chartreuse he took from a cupboard in the wall.

He hadn’t once ceased looking at Daisy, and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes. Sometimes, too, he stared around at his possessions in a dazed way, as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real. Once he nearly toppled down a flight of stairs.

His bedroom was the simplest room of all — except where the dresser was garnished with a toilet set of pure dull gold. Daisy took the brush with delight, and smoothed her hair, whereupon Gatsby sat down and shaded his eyes and began to laugh.

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surreal

Commented [15]:
interior setting

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what’s real or unreal

Commented [17]:
As the three people make their way up to and through Gatsby’s mansion, Gatsby revels in the impact his belongings have on Daisy. They have, in essence, accomplished that which he intended: They impress her. In fact, Gatsby is able to “[revalue] everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes.” Keep this image in mind during Chapter 9, when it is inverted as Gatsby’s father revalues his son based on the beauty and number of his material possessions. In another of the book’s memorable images, Gatsby takes out a pile of shirts and throws them in the air. The shirts keep coming, and Gatsby keeps throwing them. Shirts of every color, every style, and every texture become strewn about the room in a glaringly obvious display of his wealth. How can a man who isn’t well off afford to have such an array of shirts? The shirts’ impact is not lost on Daisy, who is always appreciative of a great display of materialism. In fact, the excess and bounty of Gatsby’s shirts causes her to put her face into them and cry, sad because she’s “never seen such — such beautiful shirts before.” Although a seemingly nonsensical statement, it is really a good indication of her true nature. She isn’t weeping for a lost love; rather she is weeping at the overt display of wealth she sees before her.

“It’s the funniest thing, old sport,” he said hilariously. “I can’t — When I try to —”

He had passed visibly through two states and was entering upon a third. After his embarrassment and his unreasoning joy he was consumed with wonder at her presence. He had been full of the idea so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, at an inconceivable pitch of intensity. Now, in the reaction, he was running down like an overwound clock.

Recovering himself in a minute he opened for us two hulking patent cabinets which held his massed suits and dressing-gowns and ties, and his shirts, piled like bricks in stacks a dozen high.

“I’ve got a man in England who buys me clothes. He sends over a selection of things at the beginning of each season, spring and fall.”

He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel, which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-colored disarray. While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher — shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, and monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly, with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily.

“They’re such beautiful shirts,” she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. “It makes me sad because I’ve never seen such — such beautiful shirts before.”

After the house, we were to see the grounds and the swimming-pool, and the hydroplane and the mid-summer flowers — but outside Gatsby’s window it began to rain again, so we stood in a row looking at the corrugated surface of the Sound.

“If it wasn’t for the mist we could see your home across the bay,” said Gatsby. “You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock.”

Daisy put her arm through his abruptly, but he seemed absorbed in what he had just said. Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one.

I began to walk about the room, examining various indefinite objects in the half darkness. A large photograph of an elderly man in yachting costume attracted me, hung on the wall over his desk.

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They’re such beautiful shirts - Daisy is very emotional about the shirts and indeed all of Gatsby’s possessions. Her comment is nonsensical and shallow, but can be interpreted as an oblique reference to the man. She doesn’t comment directly on Gatsby, but is very quick to identify with her surroundings, even brushing her hair with his gold hairbrush. Her tears may represent her realisation that she passed up the chance of marrying Gatsby for the sake of material security - which would have come her way anyway.

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When the trio attempts to move down to the waterfront they are held up by the rain, giving Gatsby the opportunity to make a telling statement. He informs Daisy, who clearly has no idea, that her house is right across the Sound from where they are standing. He then continues, informing her “You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock.” Gatsby’s admission of this secret is lost neither on Nick nor on Gatsby himself (according to Nick). Daisy, however, remains oblivious to its meaning. She is unable to grasp that by Gatsby telling her this, he has shared one of his most sanctified rituals. Prior to that day, the green light (representing many things: hope, youth, forward momentum, money) represented a dream to him and by reaching out to it, he was bringing himself closer to his love. Now that she was standing beside him, her arm in his, the light will no longer hold the same significance. His dream, the goal for which he patterned most of his adult life on, must now change.

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You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock. - Gatsby reveals the extent to which he has followed Daisy and observed her life from afar. The reference to the green light connects this chapter with the first chapter, in which Gatsby is introduced as a silhouetted figure reaching out to a green light ‘that might have been the end of a dock’. Structurally, this marks the end of that period of longing for Gatsby, and Nick imagines that Gatsby is also ‘absorbed’ by this realisation. Nick comments that the symbolic value of the green light has just been lost, which means that Gatsby’s ‘count of enchanted objects had diminished by one.’ This moment may be considered to be a turning point in the idealism of the novel, with Gatsby’s wishes fulfilled but the reality falling short of the dream.

“Who’s this?”

“That? That’s Mr. Dan Cody, old sport.”

The name sounded faintly familiar.

“He’s dead now. He used to be my best friend years ago.”

There was a small picture of Gatsby, also in yachting costume, on the bureau — Gatsby with his head thrown back defiantly — taken apparently when he was about eighteen.

“I adore it,” exclaimed Daisy. “The pompadour! You never told me you had a pompadour — or a yacht.”

“Look at this,” said Gatsby quickly. “Here’s a lot of clippings — about you.”

They stood side by side examining it. I was going to ask to see the rubies when the phone rang, and Gatsby took up the receiver.

“Yes. . . . well, I can’t talk now. . . . I can’t talk now, old sport. . . . I said a small town. . . . he must know what a small town is. . . . well, he’s no use to us if Detroit is his idea of a small town. . . .”

He rang off.

“Come here quick!” cried Daisy at the window.

The rain was still falling, but the darkness had parted in the west, and there was a pink and golden billow of foamy clouds above the sea.

“Look at that,” she whispered, and then after a moment: “I’d like to just get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and push you around.”

I tried to go then, but they wouldn’t hear of it; perhaps my presence made them feel more satisfactorily alone.

“I know what we’ll do,” said Gatsby, “we’ll have Klipspringer play the piano.”

He went out of the room calling “Ewing!” and returned in a few minutes accompanied by an embarrassed, slightly worn young man, with shell-rimmed glasses and scanty blond hair. He was now decently clothed in a “sport shirt,” open at the neck, sneakers, and duck trousers of a nebulous hue.

“Did we interrupt your exercises?” inquired Daisy politely.

“I was asleep,” cried Mr. Klipspringer, in a spasm of embarrassment. “That is, I’d *been* asleep. Then I got up. . . .”

“Klipspringer plays the piano,” said Gatsby, cutting him off. “Don’t you, Ewing, old sport?”

Commented [20]:

That’s Mr Dan Cody - Nick examines two photographs in Gatsby’s bedroom, one large one of Dan Cody, and a smaller one of Gatsby, both in yachting costume. More information about Dan Cody will be given in Chapter 6, but Gatsby merely tells us here that he was his ‘best friend years ago’. Daisy’s comment, expressing her approval of Gatsby’s hairstyle (a ‘pompadour’) and complaining that he never told her he had this or a yacht, might suggest that she recognises the material details of the photograph and the evidence of wealth, and values these above the person in the image. Gatsby also produces clippings of Daisy, which they examine together.

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old sport - Gatsby’s catchphrase is used many times in this chapter, and is clearly part of his idiolect, an identifying feature which Nick has already suggested is a pretension.

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This chapter, exploring the private space of Gatsby’s bedroom, and in which revelations are made about the depth of Gatsby’s feeling for Daisy, offers the greatest access to Gatsby’s interior life. However, Nick’s representation of Gatsby’s thoughts and feelings is always hesitant, using the language of uncertainty: ‘Possibly it had occurred to him...’, ‘as though a faint doubt had occurred to him’, and, ‘there must have been moments...’, ‘I think that voice held him the most’.

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I’d like to just get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and push you around - Daisy’s exclamation is gushingly romantic, but also infantilises Gatsby, and establishes her wish to be in control or in possession of him

Commented [23]:

Gatsby and Daisy are, as is evidenced in this chapter, generally a good match. Gatsby’s dreamlike nature complements nicely Daisy’s ethereal qualities. Gatsby, the collector of “enchanted objects,” as Nick says, seems the perfect match for the otherworldly Daisy who runs exclusively on emotional responses. As if caught up in Gatsby’s dream vision, Daisy calls him to the window to look at the “pink and golden billow of foamy clouds,” declaring to Gatsby that she’d “like to just get one of those pink clouds and put you in it and push you around.”

“I don’t play well. I don’t — I hardly play at all. I’m all out of prac —”

“We’ll go down-stairs,” interrupted Gatsby. He flipped a switch. The gray windows disappeared as the house glowed full of light.

In the music-room Gatsby turned on a solitary lamp beside the piano. He lit Daisy’s cigarette from a trembling match, and sat down with her on a couch far across the room, where there was no light save what the gleaming floor bounced in from the hall. When Klipspringer had played *The Love Nest*, he turned around on the bench and searched unhappily for Gatsby in the **gloom**.

“I’m all out of practice, you see. I told you I couldn’t play. I’m all out of prac —”

“Don’t talk so much, old sport,” commanded Gatsby. “Play!”

“In the morning,

In the evening,

Ain’t we got fun—”

Outside the wind was loud and there was a faint flow of thunder along the Sound. All the lights were going on in West Egg now; the electric trains, men-carrying, were plunging home through the rain from New York. **It was the hour of a profound human change, and excitement was generating on the air.**

“One thing’s sure and nothing’s surer

The rich get richer and the poor get— children.

In the meantime,

In between time—”

As I went over to say good-by I saw that the expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby’s face, **as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness. Almost five years! There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams — not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart.**

As I watched him he adjusted himself a little, visibly. His hand took hold of hers, and as she said something low in his ear he turned toward her with a rush of emotion. **I**

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The Love Nest / Ain’t we got fun- These were popular songs from the early 1920s, played by Ewing Klipspringer (known as ‘the boarder’ because he seems to have taken up residence at Gatsby’s home, taking advantage of Gatsby’s hospitality). Gatsby has finally brought Daisy to his home, and would like to resume his relationship with her, making his home a ‘love nest’. However, it soon becomes clear in the next chapter that she has different intentions.

Commented [25]:

a profound human change - Nick notes that the timing of Daisy and Gatsby’s reunion coincides with ‘the hour of a profound human change’ as the workers return home from New York. This sense of homecoming is perhaps a reflection of Gatsby’s and Daisy’s return to each other, with ‘excitement ... generating on the air’. However, there are also ominous hints of catastrophe in this passage too (a motif used when Rochester and Jane Eyre declare their love in *Jane Eyre*):

Commented [26]:

the colossal vitality of his illusion - Nick considers the possibility that Gatsby has harboured unrealistic expectations in his long wait for Daisy (‘Almost five years!’) and imagines that he might be bewildered or doubtful now that he is faced with the real Daisy: There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams. Acknowledging the power of the imagination, Nick states that: No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man can store up in his ghostly heart. Gatsby’s capacity for imagining and dreaming is highly valued by Nick. In Chapter 1 he noted that Gatsby had: some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life... an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness’ and notes that it was ‘what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams’ which made Nick temporarily retreat from humanity.

think that voice held him most, with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because it couldn't be over-dreamed — that voice was a deathless song.

They had forgotten me, but Daisy glanced up and held out her hand; Gatsby didn't know me now at all. I looked once more at them and they looked back at me, remotely, possessed by intense life. Then I went out of the room and down the marble steps into the rain, leaving them there together.

Commented [27]:

That voice held him most ... a deathless song - Daisy's voice has been commented on several times as being captivating and seductive. Here, Nick connects it with the comments on Gatsby's idealism, and the ironic use of song in the chapter. The adjectives 'feverish' and 'deathless' are disturbing, and suggest Daisy's power is perhaps malign or unnatural.

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As the chapter ends, Nick, the trusted voice of reason, offers an astute reading on the whole situation. He interprets a look of Gatsby's face to indicate that perhaps he is dissatisfied with the whole affair. What occurs to Nick, and perhaps to Gatsby, is that once a dream is achieved, life must still continue. How does one go about the business of reordering his life after bringing a fabrication, a fantasy, to life? For Gatsby, who has spent the past five years dreaming of Daisy, one wonders whether through the five years he was in love with Daisy, or the idea of Daisy. His relentless pursuit of his dream has allowed him ample opportunity to construct scenarios in his head and to imagine her not necessarily as she is, but as he perceives her to be. As Gatsby peers into Daisy's eyes and listens to her enchanting voice, he becomes more and more in love with the vision he has conjured in front of him. As the chapter closes, Daisy and Gatsby have become so lost in each other that Nick ceases to exist for them. In response, Nick quietly retreats, leaving the lovers alone together.