

# The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald

## CHAPTER 9

After two years I remember the rest of that day, and that night and the next day, only as an endless drill of police and photographers and newspaper men in and out of Gatsby's front door. A rope stretched across the main gate and a policeman by it kept out the curious, but little boys soon discovered that they could enter through my yard, and there were always a few of them clustered open-mouthed about the pool. Someone with a positive manner, perhaps a detective, used the expression "madman" as he bent over Wilson's body that afternoon, and the adventitious authority of his voice set the key for the newspaper reports next morning.

Most of those reports were a nightmare — grotesque, circumstantial, eager, and untrue. When Michaelis's testimony at the inquest brought to light Wilson's suspicions of his wife I thought the whole tale would shortly be served up in racy pasquinade — but Catherine, who might have said anything, didn't say a word. She showed a surprising amount of character about it too — looked at the coroner with determined eyes under that corrected brow of hers, and swore that her sister had never seen Gatsby, that her sister was completely happy with her husband, that her sister had been into no mischief whatever. She convinced herself of it, and cried into her handkerchief, as if the very suggestion was more than she could endure. S. Wilson was reduced to a man "deranged by grief" in order that the case might remain in its simplest form. And it rested there.

But all this part of it seemed remote and unessential. I found myself on Gatsby's side, and alone. From the moment I telephoned news of the catastrophe to West Egg village, every surmise about him, and every practical question, was referred to me. At first I was surprised and confused; then, as he lay in his house and didn't move or breathe or speak, hour upon hour, it grew upon me that I was responsible, because no one else was interested — interested, I mean, with that intense personal interest to which every one has some vague right at the end.

### Commented [1]: Synopsis of Chapter 9

From a distance of 'two years' afterwards, Nick remembers the next few days as an 'endless drill' of people entering and leaving Gatsby's house. The truth about Gatsby is distorted by 'grotesque' newspaper reports and Catherine's presentation of her sister Myrtle as a woman of virtue.

Nick feels that he is responsible for Gatsby and tries to 'get somebody' for his funeral and to show friendship for him. Several telephone calls yield no answers: Daisy and Tom have gone away, Meyer Wolfsheim is unavailable, and the only caller assumes Gatsby is alive and reveals some criminal activity involving bonds.

Gatsby's father arrives. He is grieving but also impressed by his son's wealth. He shows Nick a book with an inscription by Gatsby dated 1906 and talks of his son's ambition to 'get ahead'. Klipspringer declines ...

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After two years - Nick's narrative now moves forwards beyond the time setting of Chapter 1 (the careful reference to 'last autumn' in Chapter 1 indicates that the narrator's time setting is within a year of the main events of the book). Now we are reminded that this has been a retrospective narration but also newly positioned at a greater distance than ever. Memory is at issue here, as Nick claims only to recall an 'endless drill' of people, but offers a detailed account of events leading to the funeral of Gatsby and his own departure from the East. Even if Nick is an unreliable narrator, we have ...

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madman' - This label for Wilson is shown to be wholly inadequate as Nick demonstrates the way that this narrative is created out of one authoritative-sounding comment, and then distorted by the newspaper reporters. Furthermore, the inquest only partially revealed the truth, as Catherine (Myrtle's sister) denied that Myrtle had ever had an affair, so that Wilson's actions would be explained as those of 'a man deranged by grief'.

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racy pasquinade - A pasquinade is a public lampoon of someone. Nick criticises the newspaper reporters for their sensationalism, describing the reports as 'a nightmare - grotesque, circumstantial, eager and untrue.' This is in keeping with the type of stories already attached to Gatsby and which were fuelling the curiosity of journalists, as mentioned at the start of Chapter 6.

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I found myself on Gatsby's side and alone - Nick feels a strong sense of responsibility towards Gatsby. He sees his role as needing 'to get somebody for him' and imagines Gatsby asking for this too:

Look here, old sport, you've got to get somebody for me. You've got to try hard. I can't go through this alone.

Both Nick and Gatsby are united in their abandonment by others: Daisy disappears with Tom, Meyer Wolfsheim evades contact, and Nick searches without ...

I called up Daisy half an hour after we found him, called her instinctively and without hesitation. But she and Tom had gone away early that afternoon, and taken baggage with them.

“Left no address?”

“No.”

“Say when they’d be back?”

“No.”

“Any idea where they are? How I could reach them?”

“I don’t know. Can’t say.”

I wanted to get somebody for him. I wanted to go into the room where he lay and reassure him: “I’ll get somebody for you, Gatsby. Don’t worry. Just trust me and I’ll get somebody for you —”

Meyer Wolfsheim’s name wasn’t in the phone book. The butler gave me his office address on Broadway, and I called Information, but by the time I had the number it was long after five, and no one answered the phone.

“Will you ring again?”

“I’ve rung them three times.”

“It’s very important.”

“Sorry. I’m afraid no one’s there.”

I went back to the drawing-room and thought for an instant that they were chance visitors, all these official people who suddenly filled it. But, as they drew back the sheet and looked at Gatsby with unmoved eyes, his protest continued in my brain:

“Look here, old sport, you’ve got to get somebody for me. You’ve got to try hard. I can’t go through this alone.”

Some one started to ask me questions, but I broke away and going up-stairs looked hastily through the unlocked parts of his desk — he’d never told me definitely that his parents were dead. But there was nothing — only the picture of Dan Cody, a token of forgotten violence, staring down from the wall.

Next morning I sent the butler to New York with a letter to Wolfsheim, which asked for information and urged him to come out on the next train. That request seemed superfluous when I wrote it. I was sure he’d start when he saw the newspapers, just as I was sure there’d be a wire from Daisy before noon — but neither a wire nor Mr.

**Commented [6]:**

the picture of Dan Cody, a token of forgotten violence - Earlier references to Dan Cody in Chapter 6 mention violence as part of Cody’s debauched lifestyle, and there is also the implied violence associated with Ella Kaye, who was present when Cody died and gained the inheritance intended for Gatsby. That violence is the most salient association prompted by the picture perhaps highlights the underlying nature of Gatsby’s life

Wolfsheim arrived; no one arrived except more police and photographers and newspaper men. When the butler brought back Wolfsheim's answer I began to have a feeling of defiance, of scornful solidarity between Gatsby and me against them all.

*Dear Mr. Carraway.* This has been one of the most terrible shocks of my life to me I hardly can believe it that it is true at all. Such a mad act as that man did should make us all think. I cannot come down now as I am tied up in some very important business and cannot get mixed up in this thing **now**. If there is anything I can do a little later let me know in a letter by Edgar. I hardly know where I am when I hear about a thing like this and am completely knocked down and out.

Yours truly *Meyer Wolfsheim*

and then hasty addenda beneath:

Let me know about the funeral etc. Do not know his family at all.

When the phone rang that afternoon and Long Distance said Chicago was calling I thought this would be Daisy at last. But the connection came through as a man's voice, very thin and far away.

"This is Slagle speaking . . ."

"Yes?" The name was unfamiliar.

"Hell of a note, isn't it? Get my wire?"

"There haven't been any wires."

"Young Parke's in trouble," he said rapidly. "They picked him up when he handed the bonds over the counter. They got a circular from New York giving 'em the numbers just five minutes before. What d'you know about that, hey? You never can tell in these hick towns —"

"Hello!" I interrupted breathlessly. "Look here — this isn't Mr. Gatsby. Mr. Gatsby's dead."

There was a long silence on the other end of the wire, followed by an exclamation . . . then a quick squawk as the connection was broken.

I think it was on the third day that a **telegram** signed Henry C. Gatz arrived from a town in Minnesota. **It said only that the sender was leaving immediately and to postpone the funeral until he came.**

**Commented [7]:**

cannot get mixed up in this thing now - Wolfsheim's letter in response to Nick's letter hints at the perceived danger of being associated with Gatsby. The language is redolent of euphemistic phrases stereotypically used by gangsters, such as 'very important business' and 'mixed up in this thing'. The next communication is a telephone call from a mysterious man named 'Slagle' informing Nick (whom he assumes to be Gatsby) of a foiled plot involving bonds. This juxtaposition of details reinforces the interpretation that Wolfsheim's reluctance to attend Gatsby is based on self-preservation

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a telegram – Gatz's mode of communication is more old-fashioned than the telephone (frequently associated with failed communication) but more reliable. Its brevity (necessary since the user was charged by the word) increased the need for clarity and thus conveyed a sense of authenticity.

**Commented [9]:**

signed Henry C. Gatz - Gatsby's father is introduced into the narrative, having only appeared briefly in the account given in Chapter 6:

his parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people – his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all.

Gatsby's parents are certainly eclipsed by Cody as a defining influence upon Gatsby, and there is no picture of them to signal their inclusion in the narrative of Gatsby's life, until Nick describes Henry C. Gatz at this point in the novel.

It was Gatsby's father, a solemn old man, very helpless and dismayed, bundled up in a long cheap **ulster** against the warm September day. His eyes leaked continuously with excitement, and when I took the bag and umbrella from his hands he began to pull so incessantly at his sparse gray beard that I had difficulty in getting off his coat. He was on the point of collapse, so I took him into the music room and made him sit down while I sent for something to eat. But he wouldn't eat, and the glass of milk spilled from his trembling hand.

"I saw it in the Chicago newspaper," he said. "It was all in the Chicago newspaper. I started right away."

"I didn't know how to reach you." His eyes, seeing nothing, moved ceaselessly about the room.

"It was a madman," he said. "He must have been mad."

"Wouldn't you like some coffee?" I urged him.

"I don't want anything. I'm all right now, Mr. —"

"Carraway."

"Well, I'm all right now. Where have they got **Jimmy**?" I took him into the drawing-room, where his son lay, and left him there. Some little boys had come up on the steps and were looking into the hall; when I told them who had arrived, they went reluctantly away.

After a little while Mr. Gatz opened the door and came out, his mouth ajar, his face flushed slightly, his eyes leaking isolated and unpunctual tears. He had reached an age where death no longer has the quality of ghastly surprise, and when he looked around him now for the first time and saw the height and splendor of the hall and the great rooms opening out from it into other rooms, his grief began to be mixed with an awed pride. I helped him to a bedroom up-stairs; while he took off his coat and vest I told him that all arrangements had been deferred until he came.

"I didn't know what you'd want, Mr. Gatsby —"

"Gatz is my name."

"— Mr. Gatz. I thought you might want to take the body West."

He shook his head.

"Jimmy always liked it better down East. He rose up to his position in the East. Were you a friend of my boy's, Mr. —?"

**Commented [10]:**

a long cheap ulster – An ulster is a heavy-duty overcoat. This detail demonstrates Gatz's poverty compared to his son - he is later said to be in awe of his son's house. The language associated with him conveys his powerlessness: 'solemn', 'helpless', 'dismayed', 'collapse', 'trembling'.

**Commented [11]:**

Where have they got Jimmy? - This naming of Gatsby anchors him firmly back in his origins, even though his father recognises that 'He rose up to his position in the East.' The use of another figure from Gatsby's past introduces the possibility of an authentic narrative, but this is unfulfilled despite the use of the photo and the book (two narrative devices) which add further fragments to the story about Gatsby.

“We were close friends.”

“He had a big future before him, you know. He was only a young man, but he had a lot of brain power here.”

He touched his head impressively, and I nodded.

“If he’d of lived, he’d of been a great man. A man like James J. Hill. He’d of helped build up the country.”

“That’s true,” I said, uncomfortably.

He fumbled at the embroidered coverlet, trying to take it from the bed, and lay down stiffly — was instantly asleep.

That night an obviously frightened person called up, and demanded to know who I was before he would give his name.

“This is Mr. Carraway,” I said.

“Oh!” He sounded relieved. “This is Klipspringer.” I was relieved too, for that seemed to promise another friend at Gatsby’s grave. I didn’t want it to be in the papers and draw a sightseeing crowd, so I’d been calling up a few people myself. They were hard to find.

“The funeral’s to-morrow,” I said. “Three o’clock, here at the house. I wish you’d tell anybody who’d be interested.”

“Oh, I will,” he broke out hastily. “Of course I’m not likely to see anybody, but if I do.”

His tone made me suspicious.

“Of course you’ll be there yourself.”

“Well, I’ll certainly try. What I called up about is ——”

“Wait a minute,” I interrupted. “How about saying you’ll come?”

“Well, the fact is — the truth of the matter is that I’m staying with some people up here in Greenwich, and they rather expect me to be with them to-morrow. In fact, there’s a sort of picnic or something. Of course I’ll do my very best to get away.”

I ejaculated an unrestrained “Huh!” and he must have heard me, for he went on nervously:

“What I called up about was a pair of shoes I left there. I wonder if it’d be too much trouble to have the butler send them on. You see, they’re tennis shoes, and I’m sort of helpless without them. My address is care of B. F. ——”

**Commented [12]:**

He’d of helped build up the country - The irony of this statement, just as Gatsby’s criminality is brought more sharply into focus, confirms that his father is just as unreliable a source of information as anyone else. It also suggests a darker side to America’s economy, where bribery, corruption and organised crime exerted strong influence upon statesmen and law enforcers. Even Tom and Daisy, as legitimate members of the powerful class, are now shown to be profoundly dishonest and unsavoury characters, yet remain part of the fabric of the country.

**Commented [13]:**

there’s a sort of picnic or something - Klipspringer’s excuse for not attending Gatsby’s funeral underlines both his own frivolous nature and the lack of respect for Gatsby that was typical of Gatsby’s guests. The telephone call from Klipspringer is actually made in order to retrieve his shoes, displaying a materialism which disgusts Nick, and he responds by cutting off the call.

I didn't hear the rest of the name, because I hung up the receiver.

After that I felt a certain shame for Gatsby — one gentleman to whom I telephoned implied that he had got what he deserved. However, that was my fault, for he was one of those who used to sneer most bitterly at Gatsby on the courage of Gatsby's liquor, and I should have known better than to call him.

The morning of the funeral I went up to New York to see Meyer Wolfsheim; I couldn't seem to reach him any other way. The door that I pushed open, on the advice of an elevator boy, was marked "The Swastika Holding Company," and at first there didn't seem to be any one inside. But when I'd shouted "hello" several times in vain, an argument broke out behind a partition, and presently a lovely Jewess appeared at an interior door and scrutinized me with black hostile eyes.

"Nobody's in," she said. "Mr. Wolfsheim's gone to Chicago."

The first part of this was obviously untrue, for someone had begun to whistle "The Rosary," tunelessly, inside.

"Please say that Mr. Carraway wants to see him."

"I can't get him back from Chicago, can I?"

At this moment a voice, unmistakably Wolfsheim's, called "Stella!" from the other side of the door.

"Leave your name on the desk," she said quickly. "I'll give it to him when he gets back."

"But I know he's there."

She took a step toward me and began to slide her hands indignantly up and down her hips.

"You young men think you can force your way in here any time," she scolded. "We're getting sickantired of it. When I say he's in Chicago, he's in Chicago."

I mentioned Gatsby.

"Oh — h!" She looked at me over again. "Will you just — What was your name?"

She vanished. In a moment Meyer Wolfsheim stood solemnly in the doorway, holding out both hands. He drew me into his office, remarking in a reverent voice that it was a sad time for all of us, and offered me a cigar.

"My memory goes back to when I first met him," he said. "A young major just out of the army and covered over with medals he got in the war. He was so hard up he had to keep on wearing his uniform because he couldn't buy some regular clothes. First time

**Commented [14]:**

Meyer Wolfsheim stood solemnly in the doorway, holding out both hands. - This gesture, as he is determined not to attend the funeral, but insists on his emotional connection with Gatsby, is very difficult to interpret. It is reminiscent of Gatsby's gesture towards the green light in Chapter 1, but also has a demonstrative, showy aspect, especially with Nick's observation that he used a 'reverent voice... and offered me a cigar.' It seems that Wolfsheim has a theatrical sense of occasion ('the hair in his nostrils quivered slightly... his eyes filled with tears'). Nevertheless, his advice to Nick has a sententious, proverbial tone:

Let us learn to show our friendship for a man when he is alive and not after he is dead.

He uses the exhortative phrase 'Let's' and the inclusive pronouns 'us' and 'our' almost as if delivering a sermon to Nick.

I saw him was when he come into Winebrenner's poolroom at Forty-third Street and asked for a job. He hadn't eat anything for a couple of days. 'come on have some lunch with me,' I said. He ate more than four dollars' worth of food in half an hour."

"Did you start him in business?" I inquired.

"Start him! I made him."

"Oh."

"I raised him up out of nothing, right out of the gutter. I saw right away he was a fine-appearing, gentlemanly young man, and when he told me he was at Oggsford I knew I could use him good. I got him to join up in the American Legion and he used to stand high there. Right off he did some work for a client of mine up to Albany. We were so thick like that in everything."— he held up two bulbous fingers ——" always together."

I wondered if this partnership had included the World's Series transaction in 1919.

"Now he's dead," I said after a moment. "You were his closest friend, so I know you'll want to come to his funeral this afternoon."

"I'd like to come."

"Well, come then."

The hair in his nostrils quivered slightly, and as he shook his head his eyes filled with tears.

"I can't do it — I can't get mixed up in it," he said.

"There's nothing to get mixed up in. It's all over now."

"When a man gets killed I never like to get mixed up in it in any way. I keep out. When I was a young man it was different — if a friend of mine died, no matter how, I stuck with them to the end. You may think that's sentimental, but I mean it — to the bitter end."

I saw that for some reason of his own he was determined not to come, so I stood up.

"Are you a college man?" he inquired suddenly.

For a moment I thought he was going to suggest a "gonnegtion," but he only nodded and shook my hand.

"Let us learn to show our friendship for a man when he is alive and not after he is dead," he suggested. "After that my own rule is to let everything alone."

When I left his office the sky had turned dark and I got back to West Egg in a drizzle. After changing my clothes I went next door and found Mr. Gatz walking up and down

**Commented [15]:**

Start him! I made him. - Wolfsheim claims to be the 'creator' of Gatsby, complicating the narrative of Chapter 6 in which Gatsby is self-made or influenced by his interactions with Dan Cody. Wolfsheim's story adds a further fragment to the picture of Gatsby's life: post-war, Gatsby was 'so hard up' he had no clothes other than his army uniform to wear and he encountered Wolfsheim who recognised his potential for criminal 'work'.

excitedly in the hall. His pride in his son and in his son's possessions was continually increasing and now he had something to show me.

"Jimmy sent me this picture." He took out his wallet with trembling fingers. "Look there."

It was a photograph of the house, cracked in the corners and dirty with many hands. He pointed out every detail to me eagerly. "Look there!" and then sought admiration from my eyes. **He had shown it so often that I think it was more real to him now than the house itself.**

"Jimmy sent it to me. I think it's a very pretty picture. It shows up well."

"Very well. Had you seen him lately?"

**He come out to see me two years ago and bought me the house I live in now.** Of course we was broke up when he run off from home, but I see now there was a reason for it. He knew he had a big future in front of him. And ever since he made a success he was very generous with me." He seemed reluctant to put away the picture, held it for another minute, lingeringly, before my eyes. Then he returned the wallet and pulled from his pocket a ragged old copy of a book called *Hopalong Cassidy*.

"Look here, this is a book he had when he was a boy. It just shows you."

He opened it at the back cover and turned it around for me to see. On the last fly-leaf was printed the word *Schedule*, and the date September 12, 1906, and underneath:

Rise from bed. . . . .	6.00 a.m.
Dumbbell exercise and wall-scaling. . . . .	6.15-6.30 "
Study electricity, etc. . . . .	7.15-8.15 "
Work. . . . .	8.30-4.30 p.m.
Baseball and sports. . . . .	4.30-5.00 "

**Commented [16]:**  
Jimmy sent me this picture - The final photograph of the novel is an image of Gatsby's mansion, sent to his father and now shown to Nick in the house itself, upon which Nick comments, 'I think it was more real to him now than the house itself.' This could serve to emphasise the ephemeral nature of Gatsby's wealth, so that a picture is more real than the actual thing, and Gatsby's father points out features of the house by referring to the photograph instead of to the house around them.

**Commented [17]:**  
Hopalong Cassidy - This character was a favourite among children during this period. He is the hero of a typical American narrative, the pioneer/cowboy who overcomes difficulties and faces challenges to his personal integrity in a brutal environment. That this is a text associated with the young Gatsby poignantly suggests an innocence which precedes his self-transformation.

**Commented [18]:**  
SCHEDULE – The inscription of a programme for self-improvement in the back of a childhood book highlights the strenuous and continuous efforts made by Gatsby to shape his own future:  
  
Practise elocution, poise and how to attain it ... Read one improving book or magazine per week  
  
His father is enthusiastic about this enterprise, but acknowledges that his response to criticism of himself was violent: 'He told me I et like a hog once, and I beat him for it.'



Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it 5.00-6.00 ”

Study needed inventions. . . . . 7.00-9.00 ”

*General Resolves* No wasting time at Shafters or [a name, indecipherable] No more smokeing or chewing Bath every other day Read one improving book or magazine per week Save \$5.00 {crossed out} \$3.00 per week Be better to parents

“I come across this book by accident,” said the old man. “It just shows you, don’t it?”  
“It just shows you.”

“Jimmy was bound to get ahead. He always had some resolves like this or something.

Do you notice what he’s got about improving his mind? He was always great for that. He told me I et like a hog once, and I beat him for it.”

He was reluctant to close the book, reading each item aloud and then looking eagerly at me. I think he rather expected me to copy down the list for my own use.

A little before three the Lutheran minister arrived from Flushing, and I began to look involuntarily out the windows for other cars. So did Gatsby’s father. And as the time passed and the servants came in and stood waiting in the hall, his eyes began to blink anxiously, and he spoke of the rain in a worried, uncertain way. The minister glanced several times at his watch, so I took him aside and asked him to wait for half an hour. But it wasn’t any use. Nobody came.

About five o’clock our procession of three cars reached the cemetery and stopped in a thick drizzle beside the gate — first a motor hearse, horribly black and wet, then Mr. Gatz and the minister and I in the limousine, and a little later four or five servants and the postman from West Egg in Gatsby’s station wagon, all wet to the skin. As we started through the gate into the cemetery I heard a car stop and then the sound of someone splashing after us over the soggy ground. I looked around. It was the man with owl-eyed glasses whom I had found marvelling over Gatsby’s books in the library one night three months before.

**Commented [19]:**

Nobody came - The time is noted as 'A little before three' and there is also a reference to the weather as rainy, as tension begins to build towards the funeral. Nick's efforts to gather mourners have produced none, and Fitzgerald amplifies the shame of this by focussing on this realisation in Gatsby's father:

his eyes began to blink anxiously and he spoke of the rain in a worried, uncertain way.

The time is carefully noted again, as the procession reaches the cemetery.

**Commented [20]:**

a thick drizzle - The weather is used to convey the sombre mood of this moment in the narrative. It isn't dramatic but rather depressing, and the lexical choices of 'thick drizzle', 'wet', 'splashing' and 'soggy' and 'straggled' are quite anti-heroic in their effect, as is the lack of mourners and implied lack of respect and recognition afforded to Gatsby.

I'd never seen him since then. I don't know how he knew about the funeral, or even his name. The rain poured down his thick glasses, and he took them off and wiped them to see the protecting canvas unrolled from Gatsby's grave.

I tried to think about Gatsby then for a moment, but he was already too far away, and I could only remember, without resentment, that Daisy hadn't sent a message or a flower. Dimly I heard someone murmur, "Blessed are the dead that the rain falls on," and then the owl-eyed man said "Amen to that," in a brave voice.

We straggled down quickly through the rain to the cars. Owl-eyes spoke to me by the gate.

"I couldn't get to the house," he remarked.

"Neither could anybody else."

"Go on!" He started. "Why, my God! they used to go there by the hundreds." He took off his glasses and wiped them again, outside and in.

"The poor son-of-a-bitch," he said.

One of my most vivid memories is of coming back West from prep school and later from college at Christmas time. Those who went farther than Chicago would gather in the old dim Union Station at six o'clock of a December evening, with a few Chicago friends, already caught up into their own holiday gayeties, to bid them a hasty goodbye. I remember the fur coats of the girls returning from Miss This-or-that's and the chatter of frozen breath and the hands waving overhead as we caught sight of old acquaintances, and the matchings of invitations: "Are you going to the Ordways'? the Herseys'? the Schultzes'?" and the long green tickets clasped tight in our gloved hands. And last the murky yellow cars of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad looking cheerful as Christmas itself on the tracks beside the gate.

When we pulled out into the winter night and the real snow, our snow, began to stretch out beside us and twinkle against the windows, and the dim lights of small Wisconsin stations moved by, a sharp wild brace came suddenly into the air. We drew in deep breaths of it as we walked back from dinner through the cold vestibules, unutterably aware of our identity with this country for one strange hour, before we melted indistinguishably into it again.

That's my Middle West — not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns, but the thrilling returning trains of my youth, and the street lamps and sleigh bells in the frosty dark and the shadows of holly wreaths thrown by lighted windows on the snow.

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The poor son-of-a-bitch - The final public judgement on Gatsby, delivered by Owl-eyes, is quite demeaning, reinforcing the sense of failure as well as evoking pity that Gatsby has been exploited by people who attended his parties 'by the hundreds'. There is a sense of irony, too, that Gatsby is reduced to this status at the very height of his wealth.

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One of my most vivid memories... - Nick interrupts the narrative to describe the 'thrilling returning trains of my youth' which took him home after long periods spent away at prep school and college. His nostalgia is highlighted by phrases such as 'looking cheerful as Christmas itself' and the heightened awareness in 'the real snow', 'sharp, wild brace' and 'deep breaths'. There is also a chiaroscuro effect, with 'twinkle', 'dim', 'street lamps', 'the frosty dark and the shadows' and 'lighted windows'.

**Commented [23]:**

unutterably aware of our identity with this country for one strange hour, before we melted indistinguishably into it again. - Most important, here, is the sense of identity which is felt keenly, but briefly, in this episode. Nick remarks that this memory encapsulates 'my Middle West' and it's interesting that it's mostly a memory of the journey to return there, plus a handful of images:

street lamps and sleigh bells... the shadows of holly wreaths.

I am part of that, a little solemn with the feel of those long winters, a little complacent from growing up in the Carraway house in a city where dwellings are still called through decades by a family's name. I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all — Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life.

Even when the East excited me most, even when I was most keenly aware of its superiority to the bored, sprawling, swollen towns beyond the Ohio, with their interminable inquisitions which spared only the children and the very old — even then it had always for me a quality of distortion. West Egg, especially, still figures in my more fantastic dreams. I see it as a night scene by El Greco: a hundred houses, at once conventional and grotesque, crouching under a sullen, overhanging sky and a lustreless moon. In the foreground four solemn men in dress suits are walking along the sidewalk with a stretcher on which lies a drunken woman in a white evening dress. Her hand, which dangles over the side, sparkles cold with jewels. Gravely the men turn in at a house — the wrong house. But no one knows the woman's name, and no one cares.

After Gatsby's death the East was haunted for me like that, distorted beyond my eyes' power of correction. So when the blue smoke of brittle leaves was in the air and the wind blew the wet laundry stiff on the line I decided to come back home.

There was one thing to be done before I left, an awkward, unpleasant thing that perhaps had better have been let alone. But I wanted to leave things in order and not just trust that obliging and indifferent sea to sweep my refuse away. I saw Jordan Baker and talked over and around what had happened to us together, and what had happened afterward to me, and she lay perfectly still, listening, in a big chair.

She was dressed to play golf, and I remember thinking she looked like a good illustration, her chin raised a little jauntily, her hair the color of an autumn leaf, her face the same brown tint as the fingerless glove on her knee. When I had finished she told me without comment that she was engaged to another man. I doubted that, though there were several she could have married at a nod of her head, but I pretended to be surprised. For just a minute I wondered if I wasn't making a mistake, then I thought it all over again quickly and got up to say good-bye.

**Commented [24]:**

I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all - Fitzgerald uses Nick to point out a shared aspect of the main characters' lives - that they all originated in the West. Nick's comment that:

perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life

might suggest that this is a less convincing interpretation of the narrative. Nick's flashback hints at his next decision, to 'come back home.' The conclusion of the novel, now that Gatsby is laid to rest, is about Nick's closing interactions with Jordan, Tom, Gatsby's house and the beach.

**Commented [25]:**

the East... had always for me a quality of distortion - Here Nick revisits some of the grotesque and haunting imagery used for the description of the Valley of Ashes in Chapter 2 and describes a nightmarish scene (with reference to the work of El Greco) as representative of West Egg. The scene is of human failure, whereby a wealthy woman ('her hand... sparkles cold with jewels') is incapacitated by her own excess, but is also the victim of misidentification and even loss of identity:

the men turn in at a house - the wrong house. But no one knows the woman's name, and no one cares.

**Commented [26]:**

distorted beyond my eyes' power of correction - Nick's experience of the East has profoundly affected him and his altered perception cannot be overcome. Nick's departure is prompted by this, and the change in season, with 'brittle leaves' and 'wind'.

“Nevertheless you did throw me over,” said Jordan suddenly. “You threw me over on the telephone. I don’t give a damn about you now, but it was a new experience for me, and I felt a little dizzy for a while.”

We shook hands.

“Oh, and do you remember.”— she added —“ a conversation we had once about driving a car?”

“Why — not exactly.”

“You said a bad driver was only safe until she met another bad driver? Well, I met another bad driver, didn’t I? I mean it was careless of me to make such a wrong guess. I thought you were rather an honest, straightforward person. I thought it was your secret pride.”

“I’m thirty,” I said. “I’m five years too old to lie to myself and call it honor.”

She didn’t answer. Angry, and half in love with her, and tremendously sorry, I turned away.

One afternoon late in October I saw Tom Buchanan. He was walking ahead of me along Fifth Avenue in his alert, aggressive way, his hands out a little from his body as if to fight off interference, his head moving sharply here and there, adapting itself to his restless eyes. Just as I slowed up to avoid overtaking him he stopped and began frowning into the windows of a jewelry store. Suddenly he saw me and walked back, holding out his hand.

“What’s the matter, Nick? Do you object to shaking hands with me?”

“Yes. You know what I think of you.”

“You’re crazy, Nick,” he said quickly. “Crazy as hell. I don’t know what’s the matter with you.”

“Tom,” I inquired, “what did you say to Wilson that afternoon?” He stared at me without a word, and I knew I had guessed right about those missing hours. I started to turn away, but he took a step after me and grabbed my arm.

“I told him the truth,” he said. “He came to the door while we were getting ready to leave, and when I sent down word that we weren’t in he tried to force his way up-stairs.

He was crazy enough to kill me if I hadn’t told him who owned the car. His hand was on a revolver in his pocket every minute he was in the house —” He broke off defiantly. “What if I did tell him? That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into

**Commented [27]:**

You threw me over on the telephone. - The act of ‘throwing [Jordan] over’ by telephone is identified as a clear fault on Nick’s part. The telephone has been a major plot device in this novel, associated from its first appearance as a vehicle for dishonesty and betrayal in Chapter 1. It then continues to undermine rather than enhance communication – phone calls seemingly portrayed by Fitzgerald as assisting in the corruption of America.

**Commented [28]:**

You said a bad driver was only safe until she met another bad driver? - Jordan’s analysis of their failed relationship, based on a conversation which takes place in Chapter 3, implicates Nick as a ‘bad driver’ and he acknowledges her criticism by saying that he’s now five years too old to ‘lie to myself and call it honour’. Cars are another new technology used as a metaphor for the failure of American values. Nick’s flashback to an idealised youth involves ‘thrilling returning trains’, again preferring an older form of technology as more authentic and more associated with happiness.

**Commented [29]:**

I saw Tom Buchanan - Nick is clear in his realisation that Tom is merely immature and careless - ‘I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child’. However, his perception about Tom’s involvement in the death of Gatsby is expressed using deliberately imprecise language:

- ‘I knew I had guessed right about those missing hours’
- ‘There was nothing I could say, except the one unutterable fact that it wasn’t true.’

Both of these examples leave gaps in the narrative, so the reader is unsure about exactly what Nick had guessed correctly, and also unsure if Nick has indeed said anything at all to Tom, since the modal auxiliary verb ‘could’ does not guarantee action, merely the possibility of action. The choice of ‘unutterable’ to modify ‘fact’ also suggests that the idea is not uttered, but merely thought by Nick.

**Commented [30]:**

That fellow had it coming to him - Tom’s justification for informing Wilson that Gatsby ‘ran over Myrtle’ conveys the idea that this was an act of revenge against Gatsby for the callous killing of Myrtle. Nevertheless, Nick and the reader have the additional awareness of the scene at the end of Chapter 7 where Tom and Daisy appear to be ‘conspiring together’. This implies that Tom knows that Daisy is responsible but is conspiring to frame Gatsby with the death and thereby protect the Buchanan family. Fitzgerald creates a complex narrative moment where the reader must judge the extent of Tom’s dishonesty: did he lie to Wilson in order to assist in the murder of Gatsby? Is he pretending to Nick that he believes Gatsby to have killed Myrtle? Or has Daisy withheld the truth from Tom and everyone? Nick’s response that ‘it wasn’t true’ whether spoken aloud or thought, may refer directly to Tom as a liar, or just to the narrative as untrue.

your eyes just like he did in Daisy's, but he was a tough one. He ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car."

There was nothing I could say, except the one unutterable fact that it wasn't true.

"And if you think I didn't have my share of suffering — look here, when I went to give up that flat and saw that damn box of dog biscuits sitting there on the sideboard, I sat down and cried like a baby. By God it was awful —"

I couldn't forgive him or like him, but I saw that what he had done was, to him, entirely justified. It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy — they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. . . .

I shook hands with him; it seemed silly not to, for I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child. Then he went into the jewelry store to buy a pearl necklace — or perhaps only a pair of cuff buttons — rid of my provincial squeamishness forever.

Gatsby's house was still empty when I left — the grass on his lawn had grown as long as mine. One of the taxi drivers in the village never took a fare past the entrance gate without stopping for a minute and pointing inside; perhaps it was he who drove Daisy and Gatsby over to East Egg the night of the accident, and perhaps he had made a story about it all his own. I didn't want to hear it and I avoided him when I got off the train.

I spent my Saturday nights in New York because those gleaming, dazzling parties of his were with me so vividly that I could still hear the music and the laughter, faint and incessant, from his garden, and the cars going up and down his drive. One night I did hear a material car there, and saw its lights stop at his front steps. But I didn't investigate. Probably it was some final guest who had been away at the ends of the earth and didn't know that the party was over.

On the last night, with my trunk packed and my car sold to the grocer, I went over and looked at that huge incoherent failure of a house once more. On the white steps an obscene word, scrawled by some boy with a piece of brick, stood out clearly in the moonlight, and I erased it, drawing my shoe raspily along the stone. Then I wandered down to the beach and sprawled out on the sand.

Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the

**Commented [31]:**

I sat down and cried like a baby - Tom's claim of having suffered himself is deeply ironic. He is at the root of the entire situation, since Myrtle was his mistress and her jealousy led to her running into the path of the car. He seems sentimental in his reference to the dog biscuits, and shallow in his use of the clichéd phrase 'like a baby'.

**Commented [32]:**

They were careless people ... the mess they had made... - This judgement from Nick is very damning, and certainly applies more generally than to just Tom and Daisy. The juxtaposition of party and funeral scenes highlights the superficiality and carelessness of a whole section of society for whom money provides a buffer from reality.

**Commented [33]:**

he went into the jewelry store — The final image of Tom is as a consumer: he goes into a jewellery shop to buy something ('a pearl necklace - or perhaps only a pair of cuff buttons'), linking together several images of jewellery, including the earlier image of the unconscious woman whose 'hand... sparkles cold with jewels' and the macabre cufflinks of Meyer Wolfsheim which were human molars.

**Commented [34]:**

that huge incoherent failure of a house - Gatsby's house is now a 'failure', with grass as long as Nick's (echoing the efforts made to impress Daisy by cutting Nick's grass in Chapter 5) and ghostly memories of parties still lingering. Nick notes the presence of obscene graffiti on the 'white steps', a clear indicator of corrupted innocence, and restores the steps by erasing the word.

old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes — a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter — to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning —

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

**Commented [35]:**

the old island here that flowered once - The focus is shifted to the shore of Long Island Sound as Nick's narrative becomes more universalised in the final moments. He imagines the experience of arriving at a newly discovered land:

for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent... face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

The language recalls Nick's earlier comments about Gatsby having a 'gift for hope' (Chapter 1), the vision of 'a secret place above the trees' where he could 'gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder' and the comment that Daisy 'blossomed for him like a flower' (Chapter 6), as well as the transitory nature of their rekindled romance.

**Commented [36]:**

a fresh green breast of the new world - The image of a 'breast' is interesting, as this feminises the land, discovered by 'man' as a nurturing and bounteous place. However, there is also a disturbing echo of Myrtle's dead body, with 'her left breast ... swinging loose like a flap'. Gatsby's wonder is treated in the same tragic manner, juxtaposing the pursuit of a source of wonder with the disappointment of failing to grasp it.

**Commented [37]:**

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. - Faith in something that recedes is presented as heroic here, and Nick endorses and shares this commitment, as signalled by the use of the first person plural in:

It eluded us then.... tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further.... So we beat on... (italics added)

There is a powerful optimism at the conclusion of the novel, defying the negative ideas and sense of failure associated with the funeral and Nick's disappointment with the East.

**Commented [38]:**

we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. - The image of the current set against human efforts and the assertion of the past over the future, emphasises the enormity of the task to 'beat on'. The use of the present tense and 'ceaselessly' suggests that this is a perpetual struggle for humanity, not surrendered with the death of Gatsby.